

COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.
VOL. CCCCLIX.

THE TWO SICILIES BY JULIA KAVANAGH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



128.



;



"Raro"

A SUMMER AND WINTER
IN
THE TWO SICILIES.

BY

JULIA KAVANAGH,

AUTHOR OF "ADELE," "NATHALIE," &c.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES

LIBRARY
DETKEN & ROCKHOLL
NAPOLI
LEIPZIG



BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1858.

The Right of Translation is reserved.

960931

FONDO DORIA I, 627⁽¹⁾



1887

PREFACE.



THIS book was written in the scenes it describes, for the class of readers to whom it will not, it is hoped, seem an intrusive or an impertinent visitor, but, on the contrary, a welcome, even though not very novel, guest.

I have been detained from publishing it by two objections. One was, that, in a personal narrative, the unfortunate pronoun "I" must necessarily occur oftener than I cared to use it, being more accustomed to speak to the public through the medium of imaginary beings than in my own

person. This objection having been overcome by the desire, irresistible to a traveller, of talking about what I had seen, was succeeded by another more formidable. What was there to say about Italy that had not been said? But this, too, was satisfactorily removed.

Opening a volume of letters written by the accomplished Mr. Pope and his friends, I fell on the following passage: —

The Rev. Dean Berkeley, afterwards Bishop of Cloyne, writing from Naples, October 21st, 1717, observes: — “I have long had it in my thoughts to trouble you with a letter, but was discouraged for want of something that I could think worth sending fifteen hundred miles. Italy in such an exhausted subject that I dare say you would easily forgive my saying nothing of it; and the imagi-

nation of a poet is a thing so nice and delicate, &c."

Surely, I thought, if Italy was exhausted a hundred and thirty-one years ago, and if, nevertheless, the public have been able to find amusement and instruction in the vast number of accounts that have since then been given of this beautiful country, the subject is an inexhaustible one.

Satisfied with this logical inference, and comforted by a vision of piles of yet unwritten books of Italian travels, destined to a public yet unborn, I resolved that these two volumes should take their fate. With their other demerits or disadvantages, I do not wish to trouble the reader; I could not, and would not, speak with equal frankness of what I consider their good qualities, or I

had never written them; and, where both sides of the question cannot be stated — Silence is best.

Kensington,

October, 1858.



A SUMMER AND WINTER
IN
THE TWO SICILIES.
VOL. I.

FIRST CHAPTER.

Sorrento.

THERE is no sea like the Mediterranean Sea, and in all that sea there is not a lovelier nook than Sorrento. Why not add, that in all Sorrento there is not a loggia like this? others are exposed to the burning sun, this is roofed; five beams tiled without, within covered with printed paper, where the wind rustles on stormy nights, and where rats and mice play strange tricks now and then, distinguish it from the rest. When we took this place, in spring, the Padrone certainly proved to us that this loggia was the gem of the apartment, even as the apartment was the gem of the house,

and ~~this~~ comfortable conviction of its superiority has never been disturbed since then.

Everyone has heard of Sorrento; everyone knows that it is the most delightful bathing-place and summer residence in the south of Italy; and, I believe, in the whole world. It stands on high cliffs above the sea, with an amphitheatre of mountains behind. It has cool and bracing air, beautiful scenery, and it commands magnificent and varied views, every one of which is an enchanting picture. Five or six furnished villas and hotels are built on the cliffs just above the sea, and overlook the beautiful bay of Naples. We are in one of these, built and furnished expressly for foreigners. It is a melancholy-looking house without, and indifferently furnished within, but to practise the virtues of economy and simplicity in household arrangements, is a standing rule with the lodging-keepers of this little place. But though visitors of every degree, from the Russian Prince, downwards, yearly visit Sorrento, no improvement takes place. From the meek readiness with which the most aristocratic and the wealthiest foreigners adapt themselves to

the local custom, it is easy to see how little their home luxuries are essential to their happiness. Satisfied with good beds and well-furnished kitchens, they submit to calico curtains, worm-eaten walnut tables and chairs, dilapidated sofas, and all the shabbiness of second-hand furniture. I have heard, indeed, that the hotels are luxurious, but I have not yet seen one well-furnished villa.

These villas stand in the midst of orange-groves, but their gardens are mere strips of ground, uncultivated and uncared for, and to which the climate alone gives a sort of beauty. The garden of this villa extends from the gateway to the precipitous cliff that overlooks the sea; it is a mere narrow walk between two walls, on one of which pink and red roses grow with the wildest profusion; by the other, which is green with maiden's hair, grow lemon and orange trees. A little stone summer-house, with benches and three arches, through which one sees the bay, the islands, Vesuvius, and the mountains of Sorrento, redeems this narrow path from the charge of false pretences. Truly this is a garden, and better than a garden;

and happily, but for the sun, might one pass a whole day here, nor find it long.

The views from the house are very fine — the higher you go the finer they get. The Sorrento people are quite aware of this, and charge you more for a second-floor than for the first. On this reasoning proceeded our Padrone with regard to the rooms we took, and to the loggia affixed to them.

The view which it commands in common with all the villas that rise on this line of cliffs is certainly delightful and splendid. To the east and to the west the bold and graceful mountains that encircle Sorrento stretch out their extreme points into the broad blue bay. Vesuvius, Naples, Procida, and Ischia, form the opposite line of shore; and below and around extend orchards, where, instead of the apple and pear of the north, the fig, the olive, the orange, and the lemon of the south grow and ripen in their season, and where the tall vine runs from tree to tree.

When we came here in May, the young green oranges that now hang by the side of last year's

red-ripe fruit were so many white blossoms, that filled the air with their delicious odour; and the blackbird and the nightingale sang unwearied all the day long — the heaviest rain — and the spring was unusually wet — could not silence their joyous carols. They are mute now — the season of spring-time and of love has gone by. But the summer heat, which has quieted them, affects no more than winter cold the beautiful verdure of these gardens. They remain green and fresh all the year round, an earthly Eden.

Vivid and sunlit extends their green line on the azure of the sea, and beautiful is the contrast of the purest green with the purest blue. The colour of Lake Lemán is celebrated. It is about as blue as blue can be where the Rhone passes through it and leaves it, rushing away under frail bridges to mingle its waters, so clear and so deep, with the chill grey Arve coming down from the glaciers of Savoy; but it is a cold northern blue after all. What is it to the tints of this celestial sea, to which no painter can do justice — which is enough to make any painter turn away in despair!

The bay, seen from Naples, is rather disappointing. It is very fine indeed; but where is the enchantment that is to make one see it and die? That enchantment is to be found in Sorrento. The purity of the atmosphere, the stillness of the air, the low dash of waves on the beach, the cliffs crowned with gardens, villas, and convents, Vesuvius smoking quietly, the islands lying on the horizon like purple clouds, the white boats gliding away, give a sense of serene and happy beauty. It is very sweet to feel, very hard to talk about.

The bay is very beautiful to-day — white vapoury clouds, with sunlit edges, repose on the horizon, and veil the chain of distant mountains that bounds it. Between Sorrento and Vesuvius spreads a glassy sea: from his ashy cone rises a vast pillar of white smoke, opaque, quiet, and majestic as a cloud. Naples looks white and still; the heat of noonday veils the rugged peaks of Ischia; a low boat, with a white triangular sail has just passed; endless seemed its reflections in these still waters, still as the calmest lake. Another boat is passing now — a fisherman's; the men are

rowing. A woman stands amongst them spinning — I can see her on the back-ground of blue sea twirling the antiquated spindle they all use here. No doubt the children are with her; the whole family is out in the boat — its house and home. It is a charming, graceful scene; and to make the picture more complete, they all sing the Litanies as they glide along the calm sea; and the atmosphere is so pure that one could count them — the air is so still that one can hear distinctly their "*Mater amabilis ora pro nobis.*"

Beautiful and touching are those old Italian customs, now Italian and once European. Habit may deaden the first impression they produce on the foreigner, and make them too much a matter of course to the native, but the idea from which they sprang is beautiful for ever. It is impossible to hear without emotion the "Ave Maria" proclaiming three times a day how the angel came down from heaven with the glorious tidings of our salvation, or the bell tolling at "Ventun ore" to commemorate the death of Christ. Eighteen hundred and fifty years have passed away, and yet not a day goes by

but this people remember how Christ was born of woman and died for man.

Well may the tidings be told — well may the memory be kept for ever on these shores, once the stronghold of man's direst tyranny to man. Many a purple line in the slopes of that calm Vesuvius, beyond that quiet sea, tells of yawning gaps and mysterious caverns. In their recesses Spartacus took refuge nineteen centuries ago — here the heroic and unhappy slave made his desperate stand, and here he perished. There is a well-known antique statue which no one that has ever seen it can forget. It represents a man scantily clothed, not because the divinity of a God is around him, but because he is brought down to the abjection of humanity. Stooping and half-kneeling, he sharpens something on a stone. His harsh, pitiless face, his attitude, his look, tell you his meaning. He is a slave, and he is thinking of revenge. I was always told that this slave was Spartacus — whether or not, he would surely do; and it is not unlikely that the same sympathy of genius which gave us in stone the pathetic history of the dying gladiator,

should also have portrayed the image of his would-be avenger and liberator. Spartacus was a gladiator too, a Thracian and a slave, the property of Lentulus, in Capua. He escaped from his confinement with thirty of his companions, and thousands of unhappy beings like them soon joined their standard. Ere long, Spartacus was at the head of ten thousand men. They fled from mountain to mountain until they reached Vesuvius, "but they were not satisfied with flight," says a Roman historian, "they wanted to be revenged." Another writer has preserved, or more likely clothed, in the pomp of his own style, the words which Spartacus addressed to his companions: —

"We are outcasts — we have no name, no home, no country. We may amuse our masters by barbarous pleasures, or support their idleness by our labour; and to be treated like beasts — to get the whip, the hot iron, the cross — is our fate. That fate we may change. We have strength, numbers, and right on our side; let us fight, and destiny is for us!" And, as he spoke, Spartacus raised his hands towards sea and sky, solemnly ap-

pealing. His companions lifted him up on their shields like any Roman. From that day he was their chief, and the insurrection progressed rapidly. The slaves made themselves arms, swords, and javelins; the land was laid waste by them, and cities were taken with vast slaughter. Two consuls were defeated by these injured and desperate men, who, in the pride of victory, thought of invading Rome. They knew the wrongs and the revenge which lay brooding there, but the day for liberty had not yet come. Crassus was sent against them; and though he at first despaired of success, he prevailed after a sanguinary battle, in which Spartacus was killed. The fugitive slave fought like a man who does not seek for mercy, and knows he has none to expect. When wounded in the leg, he sank on one knee, and, shielding himself with his buckler, he wielded his sword with the hand that was free, until, overpowered by his assailants, he sank on a heap of dead Romans. Forty thousand slaves perished in this battle, after a war which had lasted two years — forty thousand men who preferred death on a battle-field to death in the fatal circus, where their

successors, passing before the throne of Cæsar, or of his representative, used the words which have been transmitted to posterity as an apt epitome of Roman civilization: "Cæsar, we, who are to die, bid thee hail!"

And yet this may not have been the worst feature of Roman slavery. The readers of Plutarch can scarcely have forgotten this significant passage in his life of the elder Cato: "He sold his slaves when they grew old — he would not allow them food when they became useless." Do we ever praise God enough for Christianity and liberty? Do we who have never seen white slaves, at least, realize what slavery must have been? The blackness of the negro's skin hides slavery from many minds; and the distance at which ancient slavery lies from us makes it half unreal in the northern climates. Here, in this classical country, where to see an amphitheatre is to remember the gladiator — where, to look out at Vesuvius is to think of Spartacus — ancient slavery takes a living and a frightful aspect. The ancients were not blind to the degradation slavery brought on the slave-owners.

There is a vivid and striking passage in an ancient author, of which I do not remember the exact words, but which is to the following purport. Alluding to the tasks of slaves and to the inert life to which their masters reduced themselves, Pliny observes: "We live by our slaves. We see, we hear through them; ay, through them we remember the names of our friends."

SECOND CHAPTER.

A Masseria.

CARMELA has just appeared on the little flat loggia that crowns her father's house. The free and happy girl, so shy in her liberty, and who though but a peasant, claims to be of the same race with a saint and a bishop, may also be a daughter of Spartacus, a descendant of the ancient bondsmen and bondwomen of the land. Of this she certainly never thinks, and I am not sure that the real meaning of the sad word "slave" has ever reached her. She may look at Vesuvius for ever, and never guess that it possesses records as sad as those of the eruptions which she thinks so terrible. The past for her is but another present, remote and indistinct, but essentially the same.

She is just now very busy; a square blue handkerchief is folded on her head to protect her from the hot noonday sun; thus sheltered she opens figs and spreads them out to dry for the winter's

provisions; but in the midst of her task she sees me and gives me a gentle bend of her head and a little wave of her hand, of which an English duchess might envy the easy grace.

Poor plundered Italy! Barbarous nations have robbed thee of thy laws and of thy civilization, of thy songs and thy pictures, thy statues and thy music, then turned on thee with pride, and with scorn, and boasted of their superiority! Let them! They cannot rob thee of the grace which lingers in the very outlines of thy hills, and though they should take all else from thee, though not a Raffaele, not a Praxiteles should be left in the land that extends from the Alps to the Southern Sea, there will still remain to thee, an eternal and avenging dower: the beauty of thy children.

Since Carmela has thus come across me, I cannot do better than describe her, her mode of life, and at the same time give the reader some knowledge of the ways of an Italian farm, or *maseria*.

Carmela is twenty-three, *molto vecchia*, very old, as she says herself with demure gravity. She

is neither tall nor short, but slender in figure, light and agile as a deer, and, above all, graceful from the bend of her slim arched neck to the springing step of her bare brown feet. She wears her black hair in the becoming Greek fashion, which, two thousand years ago, her Greek ancestresses brought with them to Sorrento. That is to say, she divides it at the back into two plaits, with which she braids her head like a crown; two ends of black ribbon and a long silver bodkin which they call spadella from its sword-like shape, fasten these plaits securely behind; the rest of her attire offers nothing striking; a cotton handkerchief around her neck, white linen sleeves tucked up to her elbow, a short-waisted little boddice, a long skirt and a wide apron complete her toilet. Like her father, mother, brothers and sisters, Carmela wears neither shoes nor stockings. They are comfortable people; they have cows and pigs, and hens and silkworms, and a good farm of orange, lemon, and olive trees, but they would think it a strange luxury to wear shoes and stockings on week-days or in summer. It is only in winter, or on Sundays

and holy days, that the whole family is duly shod.

Carmela is not strictly beautiful, but she is better than pretty; delightful is the only word that will describe her. Her features are arched and expressive; her brown eyes have the look, soft and wild, of a young kid. There is mischief in the very sweetness of her smile, but maiden mischief securely guarded round by maiden innocence. Carmela is guarded too by that other good angel of youth — active life. Early as I may get up, I see the tremulous blue smoke rising from her father's chimney amongst the olive and orange trees, and we rarely go to bed but we leave a light burning in Carmela's windows and hear the whole family saying the rosary; work, and hard work, fills the interval. Except on Sundays and Festas this family, seven in all, are never a moment idle.

They live in a tottering building that was once a gay country-house. Paintings of half-effaced Arcadian landscapes still adorn the walls of the bare lofty rooms upstairs, and the gateway below

is of carved stone. A door of decayed wood, without lock or key — a log placed against it within supplies the place of both — admits into an open yard, shaded by a Scriptural vine and fig-tree. To the left lie the stables for the two cows, the two pigs, and the hens; to the right, tall poles for the vines, ladders and withered boughs of oak for the pumpkins to grow on, lean against the wall. Half the front of the house is taken up by a deep wide arch, black with smoke and age. Coats, jackets, straw-hats, spades, jugs, bird-cages, images of saints, cover its walls. At one end stands a rude table, a rude bench, and an old straw-chair, for here the family meet to eat and drink, and talk, and see their friends, and drive their bargains; here Carmela sews when she has time to sew; here little Teresa sits on her low chair, and wields a diminutive distaff and spindle with her plump childish hand; here Antonino teaches his bird how to whistle; whilst Vincenzino is bent on mischief; and their mother shells beans for the dinner; here, in short, the family lives, wisely preferring sunshine and Italian sky to walls and a ceiling.

Behind this arch extend dark windowless rooms. One is the kitchen, with a vast chimney; in another I saw a loom, in which the home-spun flax is woven for the linen of the family; and in other rooms behind the oil is made in autumn.

A large garden surrounds the old farm-house. I shall never forget my feeling of delight when I first entered this Italian orchard, the first of its kind that I had yet seen. A narrow path shaded by olives, some of which had reached the size and strength of oaks, and which had been planted there to shield the orange-trees against the winter winds, wound by the side of the sea. No wall rose here; the steep cliffs sufficiently guarded the place; and the whole of the broad blue bay from Ischia to Vesuvius lay below us. Another path led us into the orange-grove; taller and stronger than pear-trees they grew, and thicker than apples hung the oranges on their boughs; their brilliant foliage was so dense and their branches were so close that the sun could not pierce them; only here and there a ray glided in through the green gloom, and lit a cluster of oranges on its way. Six and seven in a

bunch some grew; others were scattered on the rich red earth, and lay there at the foot of the trees like things uncared for. Wherever we turned we saw the glorious Hesperian fruit shining before us, and I thought I had never seen anything so splendid.

This house and garden keep the whole family in constant occupation; the men dig the earth, and in every available spot sow potatoes, beans, peas, and pumpkins for home consumption. The women mind the house, the cows, the hens, and rear the silk-worms.

In this land where Virgil sang the Georgics, and whence agriculture, after the ages of barbaric invasion, spread once more over Europe, agricultural skill is in the most primitive state. The orange-trees are raised by seeds, which often fail, and by suckers, which are rather more successful. When a young green shoot springs from the smooth bark of an orange-trunk, it is allowed to grow to a certain height, then wet earth is bound around it at the spot where it comes out of the tree, bark and more frequently a broken earthen pot acting as

support. In this state it is watered until it has struck a root; it is then cut out of the parent tree and planted; it takes about a year and a half to yield fruit. The only care the older trees get is manure and water now and then. The oranges of Sorrento are remarkable for their size. I have seen some that had hung a year and more on the tree, and that were as large as a small English hot-house melon; these are not, however, the best in flavour. They have another peculiarity — the great thickness of their skin, which enables them to travel further and keep longer than any other oranges; they are gathered late in autumn, when little better than green, and exported to ripen on the way. Amongst the pleasures of the south is that of eating ripe and luscious oranges, not when you sit trembling by the fireside, but when you are melting with the full heat of a summer noon; but, alas! once you have tasted oranges in the south, bid adieu to them in the north. The mere thought of touching the sour, acid fruit is enough to make you shiver.

The orange-trees are in full bloom early in

spring, and formerly foreign ships came to Sorrento for the fallen blossoms; that branch of commerce is now transferred to Sicily, and the Sorrentini must be content with exporting the little fallen oranges, varying in size from a hazel-nut to a walnut, with which the spring winds cover the earth. They gather them most patiently the whole day long for the sake of the few pence they bring in. I was told that they were used for dyeing.

I have already spoken of the size and strength of the olive trees. All they require is time to grow; but they take so long that the Saracens, when masters of Sicily, had made a law to exempt from taxation for a certain time (thirty years, I believe) the patriotic individual who would enrich his posterity and his country with a plantation of olive trees, and sacrifice the present to the future. It is difficult, therefore, to imagine anything more cruel than the act which disgraced an English commander within the last few years, and by which the wealth of generations was destroyed in a day.

The olive crop is subject to many vicissitudes. When we were here two years ago, it was most abundant; this year there will be little or no oil.

"Our silkworms have all died; for five years we have had no grapes; and now the olive fails. The Lord wishes to chastise us," says Carmela.

Two causes have led to this failure; the great drought that has made the green olives fall unripe from the tree, and the presence of a little white worm that nestles in the pulp and creeps round the kernel, until it has consumed all the oil.

The olives begin to fall in August; they are green, small, and of little value; nevertheless, the children sweep the garden paths on which they lie strewn, and gather them in their round osier baskets. As the season advances the olives swell, become of a darker green, and though not yet quite ripe, yield the best and dearest oil, — virgin oil, it is called. In October they are almost black, and quite ripe; then is the season of the gathering; the olive plantations are full and stirring; stooping children and women cover the paths; men climb up ladders, and sit in the trees, and shake

down on the sheets spread below a pelting shower of olives, which vanish almost as quickly as they fall. The boughs which they cannot reach, and which the olives will not leave, they cut and throw down.

Purple, like sloes, luscious and most tempting to the eye, look the olives amidst the small willow-like foliage.

To gather grapes in French vineyards is but mediocre pleasure; it is no treat to wield the coarse scissors that hurt one's hand, and be burned with the sun; but to sit in the shade on an old mossy wall, covered with maiden's hair, in an Italian garden, and to pick the ripe olives from the bough is delightful.

The making of the oil lasts during the whole season of the olives. I went in yesterday to see Carmela's father and brothers making theirs. I found them in one of the dark rooms below, and attired in the usual and primitive costume of linen-shirt and trowsers reaching to the knee. They were turning; with great labour and fatigue, a rude mill, in which the olives were first crushed. This

process not sufficing to eject the oil, the poor olives underwent another crushing in another machine, equally rude with the first, and requiring like it an amount of strength and time, both of which might have been spared by a little ingenuity. But the people of this country have a rooted horror of innovation. They wish to do as their fathers did, and to make oil after the slow ancestral fashion. Thus, their ancestors thought it proper to allow a large quantity of olives to accumulate before they began to make the oil, and their descendants think so too. The offensive taste their oil thus acquires is hallowed by custom, that sanctifier of every abuse. But a just judgment visits their obstinate ignorance. Speculators in Naples buy their oil, refine it, and sell it back again to them as French oil, which is the best and the dearest.

Silk is another source of income in this favoured country. The rearing of silkworms — a delicate task, requiring constant care — is left to women. In the month of May they take the seed, wrap it in a fine linen cloth, and place it in their beds when they rise in the morning. This degree of

animal heat in sufficient; but every door and window must be kept securely closed, lest a chill breath of air should reach this dainty treasure, which, in the cheapest years, costs a ducat an ounce, and which, this season, rose to four. When the seed is hatched, the young worms are placed in a flat basket, lined with the youngest and most tender of mulberry leaves. These require to be renewed day and night. The worms are never touched; the leaves are merely placed above them; they seize on them voraciously. The quantity they devour and the noise they make in eating are astonishing. It is a curious sight to see whole rooms filled with these baskets, with the yellowish white worms crawling on their green leaves, and raising and stretching their heads in search of food.

When the worm is full sized, it is fed no more. The women take it away from the basket, and having ascertained, by drawing it backwards, that the silk issues from its mouth, they place it on a dry twig; there it is to weave the mysterious home in which its being is transformed. These little creatures take a long time to make up their

minds — they wander restlessly from point to point of their twig, they stretch their heads, they turn round, they remain quiet, they move again, at length they begin. First of all, they throw around them a fine white silk, which is the sort of down in which the chrysalis is enveloped; then, within that, they weave their shroud of pure white or shining yellow. Round and round turn the unwearied little labourers, two sometimes unite, drawing the silk from their mouth with their tiny claws, and working it with mingled ardour and patience. Less and less distinct they become, until the last dim outline of their diminished body has vanished. But their task is not over yet — the outer garment is fashioned, it must be lined. It is only when their stock of silk is exhausted that they know their labour to be perfect; then, wearied and exhausted, they cease and sleep until the day of the wakening. For some, alas! that day never comes. They are taken in their helpless state, and baked in an oven, or roasted in the hot noonday sun. At the end of Carmela's garden, close by the olive path on the edge of the cliff

that seems to hang above the sea, there is a rude stone furnace, black with smoke, where their fate is consummated; for in the top of that furnace there is a hollow in which an iron cauldron fits; and in the month of August, when the two crops of silk are in — the second begins in June — men come, light the fire in the furnace, put on the cauldron full of water, and, when it boils, throw in the baked and roasted cocoons. The boiling water loosens the silk; with great dexterity the men catch up the flying threads, and throw them on a large reel close by. Swift it turns, with a buzzing sound, unwinding the beautiful glossy silk, whilst the poor black chrysalidæ, like mummies in their swathings, over the ground. But nothing must be wasted; they are gathered, and sold to bird-fanciers in Naples. Certain outlandish birds, of which I have not been able to ascertain the name, feed on this dainty, whilst the shining spoils of the victim travel all over the world to adorn the beauties of every land.

The destiny of the chrysalis that is kept for seed is less tragic, but almost as brief. After a

sleep of two or three weeks, he wakens, finds himself provided with a pair of wings, but in a close prison. Immediately he sets to task — he moistens his silken house, works incessantly, and at length opens a round hole, without cutting the silk, and comes forth a dull white butterfly. At once a watchful hand seizes him by the wings, and places him on a fig-leaf. There he remains a few days to perpetuate a race he shall never behold, and die. The grain-like eggs are carefully gathered, steeped in the reddest of wine to give the silk a bright colour, then sealed in an earthen jar, and sent to a cool grot in Castellamare. There is no place in Sorrento cool enough to preserve them properly.

These details I have obtained from Carmela, who is an expert rearer of silkworms; and expert about everything that she does, Carmela is, I am sure, from the making of Casa Cavallo downwards. She is the cook of the family; and if she does not excel in cooking, the simplicity of Italian living is alone to blame, and not Carmela.

A regular breakfast the family never take; they

eat something — bread and cheese; figs, apples — anything, in short, in the morning. A dish of vegetables, or maccaroni, is their dinner; a water-melon, when in season, is their daintiest supper; meat and wine, unless on extraordinary occasions, they never touch.

How they, and the Italians in general, live is, I confess, a mystery to me; and on thinking it over, I have come round to the opinion of an Irish gentleman who knows the country well, and who has gravely informed me that no Italian has ever eaten enough — from which sweeping judgment the Neapolitans must, however, be excepted.

THIRD CHAPTER.

Historical.

ULYSSES had but just escaped from the allurements of Circe, and he was sailing towards Ithaca and Penelope, when, struck with the wild beauty of the Italian coast, he landed, and founded Sorrento. The spot he chose was beautiful — a sure and safe harbour, steep cliffs, above them a narrow but fertile plain, and beyond that plain a circle of verdant and most graceful mountains, prove the judgment of Ulysses.

But the syrens who haunted these seas resented the intrusion. Their islands lay close by; and besides those islands they had, all along this shore, cool and lonely grottoes, where they retired, in the heat of noon, to dine on a mariner, but where never before had they had to fear the rude and prying gaze of man. Accordingly, when Ulysses left his infant city and resumed his journey, the sirens assailed him with their sweetest songs, with what success, Homer has recorded.

Germany is still faithful to her Nix, Ireland to her Merrow, and Italy to her Siren. When we were in romantic Tivoli, we were shown a dark grotto buried in the cool verdure of the valley. Trees nodded above, ferns grew in every crevice, and below, in the vague gloom which the eye could not pierce, flowed a rushing stream. It was the grotto of the Sirens. An English gentleman, on hearing that another English gentleman had fallen into this abyss and had been swallowed by the furious waters, immediately went and stood on the perilous edge of rock, and gazed with majestic defiance at the haunt of the sirens; upon which his wife made a frantic rush at his legs, and pulled them with great energy.

"Please don't push me in, Mrs. R—!" he sweetly said.

Poor Mrs. R— shed tears, and said he did it all to make her miserable, which is not unlikely.

There was no enjoying scenery or believing in the sirens after this. We have been more fortunate in Sorrento, where the memory of the sirens,

moreover, is not a mere tradition. Their past existence is firmly believed in by the Marinari, whose forefathers saw them many a time sitting on the rocks singing sweetly because the storm was coming, or weeping and wringing their fair hands because the weather was serene.

This is a sceptical age, but scepticism must yield to facts. The sirens are gone, indeed, but the grottoes of the sirens still exist, as every one knows who spends a week in Sorrento. They are wild, rugged caves beneath the cliffs, and accessible only from the sea. You pass under a rocky arch, and glide into a lofty and gloomy hall, of which the pavement is the sea water that foams without against the steep cliffs. Here it sleeps still as marble, blue as indigo, green as emerald, clear as crystal, filling the air with a delightful chillness, and casting on the rocks around strange green and purple lights.

One of these grottoes is still emphatically called "Grotta delle Sirene." Giuseppe Mici, our boatman, showed us a little low arch in the rocks above which the hotel of the Sirena is built, and

informed us that through that hole, just wide enough for the purpose, and no more, the sirens slipped in; and he told us to stoop and look, and see how far away beneath that low, long arch the glimmer of the waters extended.

Farther on, and near the Punta del Capo, exist the ruins of what was once the haunt of a siren more beautiful and more dangerous than any of whom Homer sang. I am not learned enough to say which Queen Joanna she was, but I have taken it for granted that she was the beautiful one. Here, therefore, Queen Joanna had her baths. This lonely spot — those cool green waters — beheld the sweet and wonderful beauty which Leonardo da Vinci painted. We had long promised Carmela a passeggiata on the water, and we went there with her the other day in the boat of Mici, a sober and respectable marinaio. We went through the garden of Carmela, who met us smiling, in holiday attire. Her face beamed with pleasure — her dark hair, smoothly combed back from her forehead, was neatly gathered behind round her spadella — her apron was

tucked up. I opened it, and saw three magnificent oranges, the pride of her garden.

All the villas and farms by the sea have a path going down the cliffs to the beach. Carmela's is easier than ours, and we always take it. After a toilsome journey, we reached the shore. Teresina, who had followed us, closed and locked the door, and went up again, leaping like a young kid, and uttering shrill screams all the way. The boat was waiting, we entered it, the awning was raised, and Giuseppe was going to shove it off, when a ragged boy, who lingered about looking at us wistfully, attracted our attention. We made a sign; his eyes sparkled, and he leaped in, to the amazement and indignation of Giuseppe; but we pleaded for him; and, handing him an oar, which the poor child was to wield, the potentate of the barque allowed him to remain.

The afternoon was warm, the sea was still. We glided along the coast where, a few weeks ago, the myrtle-bushes were in full bloom, and which is still clothed with their luxuriant verdure. Below the glassy water that idly washed the base

of grey rocks, some sea herb, red and brilliant as coral, clung to the reefs; behind us lay Sorrento, with its circle of green hills; before us, the islands, Vesuvius, and the sea. At length we reached the baths. Giuseppe lowered the awning, we passed underneath the irregular arch, and entered a circular space where the sea flows, with walls of rock and a roof of blue sky.

The sun still shone on the green heights of the hill above, but cool shadows slept on the water below. Carmela bent curiously over the edge of the boat, and far down in the clear deep bed she saw crumbled masonry, and dark rocks, and green sea-weeds; and young crabs, and fine sand, and did not seem to me to care or to know whether Queen Joanna had ever bathed here or not. I spoke to her of the past, and gave her a historical account of the death of King Andrew; but one of the little crabs swimming briskly around the boat shared her attention with my words. Perhaps Carmela thought, "I am twenty-three, and living; and I am worth all the dead queens and dead beauties." Perhaps she thought nothing, and

merely enjoyed the brown rocks, the emerald waters, the serene sky, ever beautiful, and doubly beautiful with nature and solitude. But, though silent, she was none the less impressed. This *passeggiata*, one of the few pleasures she has ever enjoyed, will remain a memorable event in her quiet life.

Small things make the happiness of the industrious and the poor. To wander for an hour on that calm sea, which she has seen daily since her birth, is a pleasure to Carmela; and the little ragged boy, whom we rewarded with a few grains for his wielding of the oar, did not look as if he would soon forget the event. He said nothing; but such evident happiness suffused his face, that Giuseppe smiled, and, looking at us, observed:

“He will buy himself a melon to-night.”

A water-melon is the quintessence of Sorrento luxury.

Such were the grottoes of the Sirens. These unamiable but picturesque sea-goddesses were successively disturbed by the Greeks, the Phœnicians — that busy commercial people who went every-

where — the Etruscans, the Pelasgians, and the Samnites, who conquered the second Greece; and they probably vanished altogether when the Samnites were defeated by the Romans.

The masters of the world took a great fancy to Sorrento. Here, as in Baia, Stabia, Pompeii, and Herculaneum, they reared those luxurious villas of which history has not disdained the record, and those magnificent temples of which the eternal sea still washes on the beach the marble fragments and broken mosaic pavement.

Sorrento suffered severely in the great eruption of the year 79, and accordingly its remains of antiquity are of the kind that most delight antiquarians and most vex matter-of-fact people, for they leave everything to conjecture and little to reality.

I have read in the work of an imaginative traveller an interesting account of the magnificent temple of Ceres, which formerly adorned Surrentum. Its cells and columns were accurately described, but I have never been able to discover this temple. One day I questioned our old friend

Benedetto on the subject. We were then on the beach where Benedetto may be said to reside. He is a *marinaro* by trade. Every winter he goes to Rome to sell oranges, lemons, and sweets; and it was there and thus we first knew him. Every spring he returns to Sorrento, where he keeps the baths on this part of the beach.

Two conveniences are open to bathers — one of a wooden house built in the water, the other of a picturesque antique cavern; facing the sea, where maiden's hair grows in the roof, and an old boat moulders away on the damp floor. Behind that boat Benedetto has raised a discreet screen, and placed an old bench for the convenience of his private customers; for though he is keeper of both baths, the wooden house is not his, and, yielding him but little profit, is not treated with favour. Benedetto's chief occupation seems to be to prowl about the beach, searching for fragments of antiquities, which, as I have said, the sea daily washes there. When he is tired of this, he sits at the door of his cave, smoking peaceably as he looks at the calm sea. He is a tall and

brown old fellow, with bare legs and arms. I never see him sitting thus but I think of Polyphemus waiting for the Cupid riding a dolphin, who is to bring him a letter from his beloved Galatea; for this is the mischief of Italy, that all sorts of classical thoughts and heathen dreams and stories which leave one quiet enough in cold northern countries, here run into one's head at every turning. These are gratuitous fancies. Benedetto is certainly not very like the one-eyed lover — his two eyes are quick and keen, his thoughts are innocent of Galatea, and when he sits by his cave he is either thinking about his last lottery-ticket or wondering whether he will ever find that antique cameo which a forestiere is to purchase from him for a fabulous amount of piastres.

Like all the men of his class who have to deal with foreigners, Benedetto is a Ciccone, and knows on his finger's end every antiquity of Sorrento. When I questioned him concerning the temple of Ceres, he pointed to the beach.

"It was here," he said. "All this shore was

covered with villas and temples; but the cliffs have fallen in or been dug as quarries, and there is nothing left."

Benedetto is no antiquarian, certainly; but if there had been a temple of Ceres above ground, the prospect of a carlino would have made him discover it. We were more successful with the remains of the Pantheon. Sorrento was formerly fortified — it is still enclosed by walls and a ditch filled with green things. Outside of the picturesque gate of San Baccolo, formerly bishop, and still one of the patron saints of Sorrento, there is, below the bridge which spans the ditch and leads to the road of the Capo, a fragment of reticulated brickwork, which an attentive eye can discover through the surrounding verdure, and which a curious antiquarian may easily go and examine. This is all that is left of the temple of the gods of Olympus. The promontory, which is called Capo di Sorrento, and which stretches into the sea between Sorrento and Massa, still keeps on a rock daily beaten by the sea waves, and round which, on stormy days, they boil and foam

furiously, the shattered relics of an ancient temple formerly consecrated to Hercules. Other ruins, said to be those of the villa of Vedio Pollio and of an amphitheatre, mingle with the fragments of the temple. We saw them from Mici's boat, and did not land to examine them. The spot is a favourite one with painters. The ruins make a picturesque foreground, and Capri, invisible from Sorrento, appears in purple outlines on the horizon of sea and sky. Nearer to Sorrento, between Marina Grande and Piccola Marina, the two ports of the place, Giuseppe showed us a high and narrow arch, which was hollowed out by the Greeks, and is still called the Greek Arch. An Egyptian God, black and well preserved, adorns the market-place; and some Roman inscriptions and sculptures, representing the battles of the Amazons, with other relics of antiquity, are incrustated in the walls of the arches, and placed in the court leading to the cathedral.

There are more ruins beyond the Porta del Piano. The spot where a Naumachia formerly existed is still shown. Every one knows what

were the purposes of the amphitheatre, and with what sights the Romans rejoiced their hearts and amused their leisure hours. The naumachia was not less barbarous than the circus.

Cæsar had a naumachia not far from the Tiber. When he returned from conquering Spain and Gaul, he gave the Roman people an entertainment which historians have thought worthy of description. Water was let into the immense basin of the naumachia; a hundred vessels, manned by nineteen thousand men floated on the waters. These galleys divided, and formed two fleets — the fleet of Tyre and the fleet of Egypt — one at either end of the basin. The space between was the battle-field. Armed troops hedged the naumachia, lest these nineteen thousand men, made desperate by the death which awaited them, and emboldened by their numbers, should attempt to escape. At length, Cæsar appeared and took his seat. The double, three, and four-oared galleys advanced and met with a fearful shock. The combat began — the Egyptian fleet suffered most — the waters of the naumachia were red with blood — mutilated

men and shattered vessels sank in its depths. When the slaughter was well nigh over, Cæsar, who had been *reading letters* the whole time, rose, and carelessly granted life to the miserable remnants of the fight. And the people went away murmuring because Cæsar affected to take no pleasure in the games they loved, but occupied himself with other things. Traces of this ancient custom are still found in Rome. Every Saturday in August, Piazza Navona is inundated with water. It becomes a shallow lake, through which carriages drive, to the sound of music. The old Romans were more in earnest, and required more substantial pleasures.

On a smaller scale, but in the same spirit, the Roman masters of Sorrento enjoyed their *nau-machia*. Not far from the place where its waters once flowed, the statue of Sant Antonino, rising above the gate of the city, speaks benignantly of the other civilization which has followed on the Romans. Sant Antonino flourished in the middle ages. He was the bishop and the benefactor of Sorrento, where his memory is fresh and green to

this day. His people speak of him as of an old familiar friend. They have mixed up a good deal of legendary marvels with his edifying life, but their affection and trust in his love are none the less touching. A very pleasant and clever Sorrento girl said to me, with Italian *naïveté*:

"Signora, he is our father; and, for my part, I never pass beneath the gate but I look up and say, 'Father, since you are our father, why, then guard us well!'"

Farther on, out of the Porta del Piano, is the Piscina, or reservoir, which is ascribed to Antonine the Pious, and still supplies the people of Sorrento with water. It is to be found in a yard that looks modern, and is fronted by a modern house; and it is so well preserved, that no careless observer would suppose it to be ancient.

This is the greatness of the Romans. They built for eternity. Eighteen hundred years ago, the Cloaca of Rome was a marvel, and it is a marvel still — still it bears to the Tiber the impurities of the great city. Seventeen centuries the reservoir of Sorrento has already lasted, and hundreds of

years more it will last, untouched by time. In the conception of such undertakings, the Romans were really great; but who that pauses for a moment to think over the cost of their gigantic labours, and is not haunted by the groans of slaves and the lamentations of captives, with whose blood and tears were reared those aqueducts which still cross mountains and valleys to bear pure water to the city? Who can forget the conquered nations whose weary feet first trod those majestic roads which still bear modern travellers through Italy?

If man forgot it, God did not. The cruel city was still in all the might of her oppression when the prophetic apostle proclaimed that "Babylon the great was fallen for her sins had reached unto heaven, and the Lord had remembered her iniquities."

Would that man ever remembered them! — would that we were not taught to worship foolishly the direst cruelty because it is mingled with so much greatness! Would that, when we stand in the Forum, we remembered the captives who, after adorning the triumph of the Conqueror on his way

to the Capitol, were barbarously sacrificed there for having too faithfully defended their native land! Would that, when we enter the Colosseum, we remembered the twelve thousand enslaved Jews who built it, and the countless Christians who perished within its arena! The first time we saw this goal of every traveller's pilgrimage, a woman came up to us, and, pointing to the grass-grown earth, said emphatically: —

“There was a holy Pope, and when he struck the earth,” here she pointed downwards, “the blood of martyrs came forth.”

With which speech, she walked away. I suppose she alluded to the pontiff who held this place so sacred that he covered it over with I know not how many feet of earth to preserve it for ever from profanation.

Beyond the Piscina of Sorrento, there is a stately-looking mansion, crowned with a feudal tower, and in the lower part of which there still exists a niche with a statue of Venus. It is a plaster copy, though discoloured so as to imitate the antique. The original is said to be in the

Museum of Naples, but I did not see it. In front of the niche grows a myrtle-tree, which is four hundred years old — a goodly age.

I have enumerated all the antiquities of Sorrento — they could be seen in half a day, and, the Piscina excepted, they read better than they look. The archæologist alone is privileged to take delight in the names of buildings and temples, in the sites on which they stood, and in a few old stones which may be called ruins, but that say nothing to the eye and nothing to the mind.

The real antiquities that speak, and have a language both graceful and impressiye, are those that are blended with the lives of the people. They are not the set ruin which the Cicerone takes you to see, and which you cannot leave the place without seeing; the three columns which alone remain of the ancient Forum, with its double rows of porticoes, never paced up and down by the citizens, with its long line of shops, where buyer and seller ever met; the green, sunken stones that mark the oval of the vanished amphitheatre; the spot where rose the triumphal arch, and where women now

look out of their modern windows and children play before modern dwellings. These are nothing — worse than nothing; they are delusive. They help to inspire a contempt for the past, which no past deserves from the present, least of all a past which, spite all its sins, filled ages with its splendour, and shone with glorious glow long before our sun had arisen; above all, they serve to lead away the mind from true knowledge and true learning, and to deliver it, bound hand and foot, to the knowledge and learning of guide-books. The true antiquities — those truly worthy of our attention — are the slight, but visible traces of ancient speech and ancient race, of ancient feelings and manners to which human tenacity has clung through ages of vicissitudes, which barbaric invasions, a new faith, and a new civilization have not effaced from the land.

They are the half-naked peasant boy, who crosses his bare legs and leans against a tree with the look and attitude of the graceful Faun in the Capitol, the brown girl who binds her hair and pins up her skirt at the sides like a Grecian Virgin, the

priest who throws his cloak over his shoulder and across his breast in the folds of the Roman toga, the jar that has preserved almost unchanged the shape of the Amphora, the earthen scaldino that seems the very same held by the statue of the slave in the Vatican, even as he seems the progenitor of the popular Roman of to-day; the fatted calf that is led to the butcher's, adorned with flowers like a victim of the ancient rites, the gay draperies that adorn the church on festive days, the narrow shop where you can scarcely move, the narrow street paved with lava like the shops and streets of buried Pompeii, and, above all, the beautiful graceful nature, that makes you believe in Virgil in the land where Virgil sang and died.

A German artist once said to me, "When I was a boy I liked Homer, then there came a time and I understood him no longer; but I went to Rome, I saw the Campagna, its vast undulating lines, its purple hills, and once more I loved and understood Homer."

Strong and deep indeed is the union between classic poetry and classic lands. In the cold north,

or in the chill west, ancient poetry reads like a dream. The first thing that strikes us is the sense of its unreality; we know that it rains twice a week in fine weather, that summer is brief, but that a shepherd is a shepherd all the year round, and we do not understand the pleasures of a pastoral life. Our Idyls are all in bleak plains, or in heathy mountains; our shepherds wear woollen plaids, and carry a whiskey-bottle; what then have we to do with Damon and Mœlibeus who complain of the arid heat of noon? with flocks that feed on the shrubs that adorn our gardens? with thin suppers of boiled chestnuts and milk? But here, in this Arcadian clime, it is all revealed to us; for here the goats of Mœlibeus might crop the cytisus in bloom; here, in perpetual summer, happy shepherds might sing eclogues for ever; and here the castanœe molles — which Tityrus offered to the exile when smoke rose from the hamlet roofs, and the mountains sent forth their lengthened shadow on the plain — have a sweet flavour they could never have in the keen air of the north.

When the power of the Romans passed away, Sorrento became subject to the Greek Emperors, to the Goths and the Lombards. In the twelfth century it was united to Naples by King Roger. Forty Norman gentlemen coming back from a pilgrimage to the church of Saint Michel in Puglia, and assisted by their friends returning from the Holy Land, founded a new empire in Italy. The Lombards and the Greeks were then struggling for supremacy. The Lombards called in the aid of the Norman adventurers; they obtained it readily; but when the Greeks were beaten, it is needless to say that the Normans, true to their pirate birth and treachery, drove away the Lombards and remained masters of the country; but many years elapsed, and many struggles took place before the triumph of the northern race was open or complete. It was not until the middle of the twelfth century that Roger, the descendant of one of the twelve sons of Tancrede of Hauteville, assumed the title and style of king; but the same century saw the end of the dynasty; the house of Suabia possessed Sicily and claimed Naples, which was won by a cruel, but

more fortunate competitor, Charles of Anjou, ever memorable for having put the young and unhappy Conradin to death." His race enjoyed the throne for more than a hundred years. France, Austria, Spain, successively possessed and distracted this beautiful country; until it came into the possession of the Spanish Bourbons in the last century and forming a separate kingdom, rose in importance and prosperity as it acquired domestic peace. Of all these broils Sorrento seems to have been the peaceful spectator. It followed the fortunes of Naples, but without any romantic or interesting incident that I am aware of. No striking monuments of the middle ages have survived; a few tall towers, like that of Casa Stifi, are the only relics with which I am acquainted; the cathedral is not ancient; it has however two good old paintings, one of which is decaying for want of care; but it is cold, damp, and cheerless. The other churches, though large for so small a town, offer no particular features of interest; they are poor, and poorly decorated. The great trouble of Sorrento, during that troubled time, seems to have been caused by the traditionary foes of the

Christian world. Like all the towns on this coast, it was exposed to the ravages of the Moslem pirates.

Everyone knows the history of the beautiful Julia of Gonzaga, Countess of Fondi. The fame of her charms had the power of inflaming the heart of Soliman the Second. In Turkish style of wooing, the Emperor ordered his famous Barbarossa to carry away and bring him the most beautiful and learned lady of her day. Accordingly in 1534 a fleet rode before Fondi, took it, and nearly took the Countess too. She had only time to escape to the mountains, where she took refuge with a band of robbers, who brought her back in safety.

With as much insolence and with more success, a horde of pirates landed in Sorrento, took the convent of San Paolo by storm, and carried away the noble ladies whom its walls sheltered. The tradition of the event is still vividly preserved in Sorrento, but I was not able to ascertain the date. If I had asked Carmela she would have shaken her pretty head and assured me that it must have been a very long time, at least fifty years ago. And men

and women more educated than Carmela would not have been better informed. Don Sabino, informing me the other day of some public facts which he was relating at full length, said in answer to my question of, "Pray, where did this happen?" "In Germany, I believe; or perhaps in America!" His idea of Germany and America being that both were immeasurably distant, and therefore almost identical.

But if their ignorance of chronology has made the minds of the Sorrentini rather confused concerning the date of the catastrophe I have mentioned, numerous traditions, ruined watch-towers in the cliffs, votive inscriptions in the churches still bear witness to the cruelty of the pirates and to a hate and a terror that have passed away with the sufferings that roused them.

The pride of the crescent is humbled, its strength is broken; and if from the enchanting scenery of these shores Torquato Tasso might still learn to sing of Armida and her garden of delights, the tales with which his childhood was nursed would now scarcely teach him to pour into

song the abhorrence of Mahmoud and the dread of Heathenesse.

His name is the only world-known name of which Sorrento can boast; and Casa del Tasso, that stands on the spot where his father's house once stood, is the only memorial the people of Sorrento have preserved of their illustrious citizen.

FOURTH CHAPTER.

Sorrento socially.

THE population of Sorrento is estimated at about six thousand souls. It is a cathedral town, a fishing town, and a commercial town, for it has an archbishop and a seminary, fishermen and boats, and it deals in oil, oranges, lemons, and silk.

In England, such a place as this would be clean, mean, and shabby. Its brick houses would wear a stucco front; its shops would be gas-lit, especially its gin palaces; it would have its lectures, its concerts, its clubs and libraries, its two members of Parliament, and its dozen chapels and sects wrangling with each other; and it would be a respectable English town.

Nothing of all this is Sorrento, a poor and rather dirty Italian. Whichever way you enter it, its aspect is unprepossessing. Take the Porta del Piano, and, before you cross the bridge thrown

over the ravine that surrounds the town, turn to the right, and look at a building, which, wherever it is, characterizes the civilization of a place, viz., the prison. Externally, it is not striking. We resided a summer in Sorrento without knowing that this was a prison. I saw what I considered to be an old house with grated windows; within, I caught sight of two or three dirty men, one of whom seemed very fond of twanging an old mandoline; and it was not until I observed a woman sitting on a chair in the street and talking to one of these men within, that I could not help asking why she did not go in? I was then informed that this was the jail of Sorrento. I have examined it more attentively since then, but I have seen little besides what I first saw. Dirty rooms, where dirty men reside, and lead rather an easy than a painful life — where they talk and joke with people in the streets, see all that goes on in the piazza, join in the hymns and devotions of the processions, and have a good view of the fireworks that close the festa — constitute the prison of Sorrento. The upper rooms are devoted to the worst criminals,

who live in greater seclusion. They are frequently locked up with some spy prisoner, whose office is to extract confidential confessions, that are duly reported to authority.

Concerning the merits or disadvantages of the whole system I do not wish to speak. What it does for the reformation of the prisoner, I do not know; but it certainly makes no martyr of him. The saddest face I have seen from behind the grating is that of a gaunt old man, who spins flax from morning till night, and looks as if he could never smile again.

Having seen the prison, you cross the bridge, and pass under an archway crowded with dirty people and dirty fruit-vendors. An open, unpaved, sunburnt piazza next meets your eye. Largo del Castello it is magnificently called. Idle-looking soldiers sit lolling at the door of the police-office; unmilitary idlers stand at the door of the café. Then follow two dirty streets. Pigs run about and grunt in perfect liberty; half-naked children, who are rather dirtier than the pigs, squat on the flags, eating red, juicy water-melons. Their mothers sit

by them, on the step of their doorways, spinning flax or winding silk, and hold out their hands for a grano as you pass; and the shops look like hucksters' shops, and make you hate the idea of touching what comes out of them.

But there are two sides to a picture. To begin with the pigs. All lovers of bacon have united in pronouncing theirs delicious; artists delight in painting the children and their mothers; the very shops are better than their looks. In some you can buy plaid ribbons unrivalled for vividness of colour; in others, you will get elegant tables, desks, boxes, and toys of inlaid woods; and wherever you go, you will find houses irregularly built, but of stone, solid as rocks — raised not for a day, but for generations. Hundreds of years some number, and hundreds of years they will yet last. There is dignity and strength in their aspect — what they are they look, and no more. They were erected by a race who may disregard truth in words, but who practise it in deed; and it yet remains to be proved which is the greatest lie — that which is told or that which is acted — the

unblushing "no" of the tongue that should have said "Yes" — the mean pretence of the builder who tries to make a house look like stone when he knows, and every one knows, that it is but second-hand brick and crumbling plaster.

Striking and picturesque are these old houses of Sorrento. Beyond the door, which remains ever open, extend the gloomy arch and cool green court. In a corner stands the damp and ancient well; farther on a stone staircase winds up in gloom; clothes are hung out to dry on a sculptured balcony above, and curious children peep through its openings, or grave, dark women, with silver pins in their hair, gold rings in their ears, and, as usual, no shoes on their feet, stand still to look at you. These courts are sometimes bounded by gardens and orchards; and as you pass them in the street you see the bunch of vine on its tall pole nodding over the wall, and the red orange and yellow lemon hanging on their green boughs. *

Near the cathedral there is such a court — cool, silent, and lonely. In the wall is imbedded an antique columbarium, with its little niches,

where the ashes of the dead once reposed in their urns, and where now grows the beautiful and delicate maiden's hair.

The social life of this little place is as un-English as its external aspect. Politics, libraries, books, clubs, concerts, ball-rooms, tea-gardens, public promenades, are absent. Dirty cafés, the streets, the piazza, and the churches, are the only places where the people meet on other errands than those of business. On Sunday evenings, I have seen men and women in holiday attire, with a sprinkling of priests and monks walking, and driving up and down the dusty road leading to Castellamare, so that I suppose there is a sort of pleasure in it. Now and then the sound of the tambourine issuing from some open doorway announced that girls were dancing in the court within; but this Sunday-dancing is thought neither pious nor respectable.

The real, the popular, and general source of amusement here is the Festa. It has two distinct aspects — the devotional and the joyous — and both are thoroughly southern. The expenses of the festa are voluntarily borne by rich and poor,

according to their means; and the gaiety of church decoration, procession, music, and firing, is in exact proportion to the amount collected.

The church where the festa is kept is decorated, sometimes a week beforehand, with draperies of the cheapest materials, but bright in hue, and glittering with gilt paper, the whole pinned together with a dexterity, a grace, and a taste for contrast of colour, that are truly marvellous. The effect of these draperies, hanging in festoons between the arches, is extremely pretty, especially when all the waxlights are burning. But the painted cornices, false columns with Corinthian capitals, statues of wood, painted flesh colour and dressed in real garments, cannot be defended on any of the rules of taste or beauty. I once said so to a Sorrentino, who, anything but pleased with the criticism, drily replied, "*We like them.*" And as they also paid for them, there was no more to say.

Ringling of bells and firing of shots, throngs of people in holiday gear, going to and coming from the church, open the festa. The steps of the

church are crowded; a popular preacher is expected, or the archbishop is to officiate. The vendors of fruit and gingerbread are at their stalls, screaming and selling; children have spent half the night in decorating the neighbouring doorways with draperies and in adorning little altars with flowers; a plate, covered with coppers, makes a silent but significant appeal to your generosity.

There are not many costumes about Sorrento, yet it is a living, moving sight. The red Phrygian caps of the men, the snow-white cambric or linen veils of the peasant-girls, the black lace veils of the middle-class ladies, the French bonnets of the little aristocracy, give vivacity to the crowd. Sometimes the wives of mountaineers come down from their haunts, and display costumes which have grown too antique here. A red-silk Phrygian cap, fastened above the forehead and falling behind, a close-fitting silk or cloth jacket, with gold-lace on every seam, and a long, ample, silk skirt, plaited from the waist to the feet in such close narrow folds that it looks more like a sack than a skirt, is one of the most characteristic costumes I have seen.

A bright yellow apron and a quantity of chains, rings, and gold ornaments generally set it off.

But in the meanwhile the church fills. High mass is being sung within; the deep voices of monks, or the more tender tones of invisible nuns, blend with the pealing of the organ. A signal is given — it is the moment of the elevation — a deafening noise of petards follows. In this most unwarlike country, nothing can be done without powder.

So much for the morning of the festa; but if it be of the more solemn kind, the organ is silent. A regular orchestra has been erected in the church for musicians who came the evening before from Naples, armed with every possible instrument.

They come and go free of expense, and that is all the reward they get or expect for their trouble. The church or the convent gives them a lodging, the parishioners send beds and other necessities, and thus the music is had, and little money is spent. The music in itself is generally excellent, though not always sacred. People here think like Wesley, that the devil shall not have all the good

tunes; but they might, in all conscience, leave him a little more of his property, and observe more rigidly the decrees of the Council of Trent, to which the Catholic Church owes that pathetic and magnificent music which seems made to charm all ages and all nations.

From the law commanded alike by religious feeling and good taste, and which excluded profane music from the churches, sprang, not the genius indeed, but the school of Palestrina. The congregation of cardinals commissioned to that purpose by Pius IV. placed the fate of sacred music in his hands. If he could not restore to harmony its purely spiritual character, the faithless handmaid was to be banished for ever from the Temple. The result of this solemn trust was three masses, one so triumphantly pure and beautiful that, when the Pope heard it, he exclaimed: "This is the melody which John heard in the heavenly Jerusalem!" This mass is sung in the Sixtine once a-year — on the eve of Easter.

Nothing of the kind, I am sorry to say, is ever heard here. If Palestrina could rise from his tomb

in Saint Peter's, he would be shocked to think that, even after three hundred years, so little progress had been made in the art to which his lifetime was devoted. However, the Sorrentini are not particular — let the music be of the bright kind, and the musicians but keep time, they are content.

In the afternoon comes the procession. That of Corpus Christi, in June, was the most solemn. A long file of brotherhoods in their gowns, of monks in their habits, of priests in white surplices or gorgeous vestments, all bearing tapers, and preceded by their banners, poured out of the church into the narrow streets, singing as they went. Last came the archbishop, bearing the blessed sacrament under a canopy. Choir boys preceded him. They carried baskets filled with the shining petals of the yellow broom and tender rose leaves, which they scattered around them with a lavish hand. The windows were hung with red, blue, and yellow draperies; the walls of the orange-gardens and vineyards were thronged with girls, who showered down flowers until the pavement was bright as a

carpet. Canopied altars had been erected at every spot where the procession was to rest; and every time it rested the bishop gave benediction to a kneeling crowd, whilst boys fired the petards that announced, miles beyond the mountains and across the sea, that Sorrento was rejoicing.

The procession is sometimes followed by illuminations and fireworks. Soon as dusk closes in, the streets are lit up with many-coloured lamps, varied by such devices as zeal and little means suggest. Two Chinese pagodas adorned the door of a barber's shop on the evening of the last festa, whilst above the gate of a more ambitious rival, a glass lantern turned round, displaying to the admiring crowd below a little black horse, car, and rider, for ever prancing in the air. After the illuminations come the fireworks, bright but brief. When they are over, the festa is thoroughly ended, the streets empty — every one goes home — and if ten strike at the cathedral, it is thought late. A little extra drinking sometimes takes place amongst the least sober portion of the community, but quarrelling and fighting there is none.

This is a festa; and a festa is the only token of public life which a place like this exhibits to a stranger's eye. It is the only occasion that calls together for one purpose all the classes of its little social world. Take away the festa, and what remains to the people? To work hard, live on little, and sink wearied and worn into a forgotten grave! — their lot, all the world over. In England they drink, and beat their wives; in France, they drink rather less, but they dance more; and whilst they dance the police must look on. Here they pray and make merry; and, thrice happy in this, they do not separate joy from worship.

Such are the external features in the social life of Sorrento, which at once strike the most careless observer; but there is a great deal more which is not so soon apparent. The most important person in the place is the archbishop. He resides in rather a cheerless palace near the cathedral, and lives in a quiet, retired way. His large, antiquated carriage, drawn by sober black horses, sometimes appears in the Strada di Mezzo, which it almost fills; but he generally prefers walking on foot, attended by his

secretary. He is a tall, white-headed man, of venerable aspect. He is respected, but rather feared as a rigorous disciplinarian. His predecessor was a mild old man, charitable to the poor, and universally beloved. We were in Sorrento when he died. I heard the death-bell toll, and inquired for whom? Our servant burst into tears, clasped her hands, and cried:

“Monsignore is dead! Our father is gone!”

Next to the bishop comes Baron —. He is of an ancient Sorrento family, and he is very rich. His wealth is scattered over the whole of the country under the shape of farms, orchards of oranges and plantations of olive trees. He thus possesses that territorial importance which is far beyond the possession of mere money in a small place like this. He spends the winter in Naples, comes here in the month of June, and does not leave till November. He resides in a large and handsome house, with an arched gate ever open, and before which sits a lazy porter, who moves his chair according to the progress of the sun. Beyond the arch there is a vista of a garden, which is half orchard, half garden,

and commands magnificent views of the sea. The mansion is large, and plentifully adorned with family portraits and ancient furniture. The upper floor is let to foreigners. When I learned this, I could not help expressing my surprise that a gentleman of high birth, with a handsome fortune, should let furnished apartments; but my informant gave me a characteristic reply.

“Baron — has a great many relatives in Naples; and, if he did not let those spare rooms, he would never be rid of visitors.”

It is difficult indeed to express strongly enough the inveterate reserve of the Italian character, for to let lodgings to you is by no means to admit you even remotely into a sort of intimacy. And when Baron —, without solicitation, and through pure, gratuitous kindness and courtesy, opened his private chapel to us, the act created great astonishment in the person who gave us the news. It was, he assured us, quite an infraction of the family habits of strict privacy. I believe the motive of the distinction was simply that we were Irish. Baron — is a gentleman in appearance and manner.

His wife, who is known for her charity and goodness, is an amiable woman. Their daughters are handsome, but painfully shy. I once succeeded in drawing one so far out, that she went and fetched me her cat to look at; but it was a solitary triumph which I did not enjoy twice — cat and mistress relapsed into their primitive coldness.

Countess — is another specimen of Sorrento aristocracy. She is of an ancient historical family, well known in the province, but misfortunes have reduced her sadly. She wears cotton dresses, and literally lives by letting apartments. The world is the world everywhere. Speak of her to her townsmen, and they will smile and say, "Ah, she is of an old family — very old; but, poor thing, she is *so poor!*"

It is said in pity, but in that pity which is akin to contempt. The countess, however, holds a high head, and will not be made free with. An English lady, captivated by her title, and who told me "what a dear old lady Countess — was," took a liberty she never would have taken with an English countess of half the Italian lady's pedigree — she

called upon her unsolicited. Countess — was too polite and too politic to be rude to a possible lodger; but she was too haughty in her heart to be at the command of any foreign lady. She received Mrs. S— very politely, and, as they were neighbours, watched her going out the next day, when, opening her window, she summoned to her one of the Italian residents of the villa where Mrs. S— then was, and she thus addressed him:

“Don Sabino, do me the favour to tell the Signora Inglese that I called whilst she was out, and that I left my card.” And with an amiable *buon giorno* she threw him a card, which he delivered with the message to the deluded English lady.

I admired three things in this: Italian pride of birth, which no ill-fortune can lower; Italian complicity in cheating the foreigner; and Italian carelessness in not crossing the street to deliver the card — the window was found the readier way, and the window was adopted.

Baron — and his friend Countess —, for they keep an exchange of formal visits, represent the

two extremes of the Sorrento aristocracy; Donna Raffaele comes between. We became acquainted with her this season, and she shows as strong a desire to see and frequent foreigners as Countess — to keep aloof from them. Donna Raffaele is of good birth, and the wife of an independent gentleman; they reside in a neglected mansion with their thirteen children, and do not seem to care a pin about their pedigree.

We received a little while ago a first visit from Donna Raffaele; she came accompanied by her eldest daughter, stayed an hour, talked, and laughed, and acted too, as if she had known us all her life.

"Gossip," she said to our servant Maria, who had shown her in, "do not forget what I told you."

Maria nodded significantly, went out, and stayed away so long that we thought she would never come back. In the meanwhile Donna Raffaele gave us the history of a remarkable illness, told us about her two daughters, who were nuns; about her eldest son, who was in business, and doing

well; and made all sorts of naive confessions with a simplicity which I thought very pretty. The Italian way of reckoning time differs from ours, and to count French fashion is a little mark of style. But what did Donna Raffaele care about style? She wore a handsome watch, but she took good care to inform us it was a useless ornament, and with a joyous laugh at her ignorance, she declared it might hang by her side for ever and she be none the wiser. She was no more ashamed of her poverty than her ignorance. She was always in good health, she said, because she was always busy, and she was always busy because she had a large family and only one servant.

Maria at length returned. She entered the drawing-room with the familiarity usual here in servants, and the following little dialogue took place between her and our visitor.

"Well, Gossip," said Donna Raffaele, "have you got it?"

"No, signora, yet I went where I told you, and even to another place; but there was no getting it."

Donna Raffaele fanned herself, and looked annoyed.

"How very tiresome," she said; then turning to us, she added, explanatorily, "I wanted a little minestra, to-day."

We consoled with her on her disappointment; but it was very difficult to procure vegetables in Sorrento.

"Oh, very!" said Donna Raffaele.

A little while after this she rose and left, and Maria received other directions concerning another errand on the way down to the street-door, but this time it had no reference to vegetables.

"How is Donna Raffaele, your gossip?" I asked, when she was gone.

"She stood by my two nieces, now in Heaven, when they were confirmed. Oh! we are quite closely related."

One might go on for ever describing the various specimens of the Italian nobility and gentry, for there are plenty more, but I have said enough to show the position they hold; and these slight features I would not have recorded, but

that they seemed fair illustrations of a peculiar little world.

I need scarcely say that feudal power and privileges are gone; there still exists at the angle of the Strada di Mezzo a goodly-sized building, ever closed, and decorated with ancient scutcheons; here the cavalieri used to assemble before the political changes of the country, which came in with the reign of Murat; but it is merely a memorial of the past. The place has long been closed, and looks forgotten and disused. The cavalieri have sunk into complete insignificance; political power exists no more for them than for any other class of citizens. They are important when they are wealthy, and insignificant when they are not. To mind their property, rear their family, and take their pleasure is, in all cases, their only task in the state. The poorer nobles, who have less money to spend and less to do, are to be pitied. Idleness eats up their lives. Some, partly for profit, partly for occupation, boldly plunge into the stream of middle-class and leave, by that mixture of insolence and ignorance which

made the old nobles of the old *régime* declare, "that if their sons knew how to sign a receipt they knew enough."

There is a young cavaliere here whom I have long considered a very unfortunate person. He wears a grey Italian hat, a loose grey coat, a white waistcoat, a coral guard; he smokes a cigar, with his hands in his pockets, and he spends his life in the Strada di Mezzo. He sits at the door of the druggists, he haunts that resort of southern gossip, the barber's-shop, with its classical basin and signboard, where a foot in the act of being bled indicates the surgical skill of the owner; the mercer, the baker, even, he does not disdain; "anything," I thought, "to pass away time, and not sit at home with his mother and his sisters in the ancient house owned by the more ancient feudal tower." I learned the other day that he was not an idler, far from it, — he was a druggist!

The priests come between the aristocracy and the middle class. They are rather too numerous for the weal of the church; she is poor, and has

neither revenues nor occupation for half of them, and half of them live on their private means. By many, especially in the middle class, the priesthood seems to be considered chiefly as an honour; young men become priests, in short, for their own pleasure and the gratification of their families, not because God called them to His altar, but because they must be gentlemen, and give distinction to an obscure race. This is a bad system, and the present Archbishop has partly earned his name of "rigoroso" by the efforts he makes to check it. He has turned out a good many young men from the seminary where he did not think they were wanted, wisely observing:

"A good layman is better than a bad priest."

Indeed, of all countries, this is the last where a man should become a priest without having the duties of the priesthood to fill up his days. Idleness ends in the displeasure of the Bishop, and too much knowledge in the suspicion of the police. Woe be to the priest who reads too much,

who would educate the people, who is suspected of the most moderate liberality. Sooner or later his hour will come. No wonder that between this Charybdis and Scylla the timid, the inert, should try to steer, that, like Dom Abondio, in the Promessi Sposi, they should be contented with leading quiet, indolent lives, that can satisfy neither God nor the world. But the number of these is comparatively limited. Amongst the priests and the monks of this kingdom there is but one groan against the bondage in which government keeps them, and to the honour of the whole body be it said, the pious, the indifferent, the good, the idle even, all unite in hating a policy that would deprive them of the noblest right of the priesthood — to teach and to know.

Happy, indeed, is ignorance in this land; happy he who knows not how to read, or who is known not to use the knowledge. He may sleep in peace; he need not fear being wakened up at dead of night to answer the call of a police inspector come to see what are the books he reads, what secret thoughts he has written down in his

papers. He will not have to excuse himself for not having opened his door fast enough, and he need not explain that sleep alone caused the delay. He need not sit for hours praying to Heaven and all its saints for patience, whilst, with the insolence of office, and the impunity of power, the man of the police frowns, and ominously says: —

“Signore, what is this? A book with the portrait of a man with a beard? Do you not know that beards are Republicans, and forbidden?”

The victim does his best to keep down his hot Italian blood, and, remembering under what government he lives, he replies quietly: —

“Signore, I am not answerable for either beard or portrait. This is a historical romance, and the man has been represented in the costume of the times; every man then wore a beard.”

Vain excuse, which only further rouses police wrath. The inspector, indeed, does not stand on ceremony; he tears the portrait out of the book, and turns his attention to another volume; where, as misfortune will have it, he finds another por-

trait, with a beard longer than the first. Dire is his fury, but in the main it ends with another execution; a second portrait is destroyed.

And now the papers must be examined. The victim is learned, the police inspector is ignorant, the examination of the manuscripts, the explanations of all that the inspector cannot understand proves an endless, a sickening task, and thus the whole night was spent, for we speak of real, not imaginary facts, and it was dawn before the victim, a gentleman, a man of learning, and a priest, was left in peace. This took place in Naples. Priests are, indeed, a particular object of suspicion, and treated with very little ceremony.

One of the learned monks, at Monte Cassino, spent six months in a wretched dungeon, and, to this day, does not know why, — happy to have been released, and not to linger out his days in a prison, like many good and noble men in this strangely-governed land.

There are six convents in Sorrento, the monastery of San Paolo, where only ladies of

noble birth are received; this is one of the few feudal relics of the place; another monastery, the convent Delle Grazie, which is open to every class, and a conservatorio, or asylum, for poor girls, which has been founded by a charitable Canon, called the Santo. They are his children, and he gives them all he has. They are lodged free of expense, but must work for their support. They never go out, unless in case of illness. The Capucini have a convent some way out of Sorrento; they live on alms; the Franciscans, likewise a begging order, have a church and house in Sorrento; and the Jesuits have an old establishment and a fine garden near the sea. These six convents, two of which are supported by charity, are, nevertheless, the poor laws and the work-houses of Sorrento; every day the poor are fed and relieved at their gates. The beautiful and healthy position of Sorrento had caused many more religious houses to be established in its vicinity, but they were suppressed in the political changes which the country underwent. I asked a gentleman, with whose liberal tendencies I was ac-

quainted, whether he considered this suppression to have benefited Sorrento: —

“Indeed, no,” he replied. “The monks lived amongst us, and relieved our poor, and, at least, spent their money here. Instead of which, we have a set of Neapolitan landlords — he is a Sorrento man, and detests the Neapolitans by right of birth — who take away what little money there is, and spend it out of Sorrento.”

The convents are the chief resources of the poor, yet it is but just to mention the assistance they derive from the various brotherhoods and corporations.

These associations are still found in French provinces and villages; but they are mere relics of the past; from England they have vanished entirely, since the Reformation; they still exist over all Italy. The subject is too interesting to be thus lightly dismissed. I shall speak of these brotherhoods, not merely as they exist in Sorrento, but as they are throughout the land. Their real spirit is not sufficiently known or understood.

The spiritual good of the members, and the

spiritual and temporal good of that wide class which is known under the name of our neighbour, is the object of a religious brotherhood. Thus, when a man enters one of these associations, he voluntarily binds himself to certain devotions and penances; but chiefly to certain alms and charities.

The first time I knew what a religious brotherhood really is, was in Florence. We were looking at the Duomo, when a strange procession passed us. A sort of litter, carefully covered, was borne by men clad in dark-coloured robes, and whose faces were hidden by hoods. What were they carrying? Were they monks? What was it? We put these questions to a respectable-looking man, who smiled at our ignorance.

"They are carrying some sick or wounded person to the hospital," he replied; "they are not monks, but laics; Brothers of the Misericordia; the Grand Duke is the first, any honourable man, of any degree, may come after him."

We looked at the feet of the brothers, the only index of their rank visible, and we saw fine polished boots and coarse shoes.

"And does the Grand Duke really perform the duties of the brotherhood?" we asked.

"Certainly he does; he is called out in his turn."

Will the equality which so many generous hearts have dreamed of, ever be possible in this strange world of ours? Hard question to answer; but it seems to me that here are men who do what they can, little though it may be, to try and bring it back. However, this is not the glory of the Misericordia. We found its brothers in Rome, where they have long been established; they must all be Florentines, or of Florentine origin; their patron is Saint John the Baptist, and in memory of his tragic death, they undertake acts of very melancholy charity; they are bound to be with criminals in their last hours; to exhort them to repentance, to pray, and cause prayers to be offered up for them, to accompany them to the scaffold, and to bury them, not merely at their expense, but with their own hands. The unfortunate beings, who to others are objects of disgust, horror, or indecent curiosity, must be to them men to love and cherish like brothers.

Every brotherhood has some special charity. Some visit the sick in hospitals, attend on them, give them little delicacies, and do their best to alleviate the tediousness of confinement and the bitterness of suffering; others, covered with a coarse sack, go and beg bare-foot in the city, and apply the produce of their alms to the liberation of poor prisoners for debt. Widows, orphans, the poor who are ashamed to beg, are relieved by their particular brotherhoods. There is not, I believe, one form of suffering which has been forgotten in this distribution of charitable works.

But some of these brotherhoods have another feature, which is as important, in a social point of view, as the traits I have hastily sketched are in the religious and charitable. I allude to the associations, or guilds, by which persons of the same trade or profession bind themselves to mutual help and support. Competition has replaced the old brotherly feeling; and clubs, however useful they may be, will never supply the place of a union founded first on religion and charity, then on interest. How far these guilds, instead of dividing,

bind master and workman together, and inspire kindness and goodwill, instead of the fearful animosity of our manufacturing districts, is too perplexed and difficult a question for these pages. I only wished to indicate a social system of relieving the poor, of performing charity, and of mutual assistance, entirely different from that which prevails in more prosperous countries, and, if I can judge by what I see, infinitely more efficacious.

The Italian houses in which the poor are received and relieved do not, indeed, differ in principle from English workhouses, though the practical difference between them is infinite. Nevertheless, in no country do the poor like them. They are prisons everywhere. There is, however, a very remarkable exception. The Pia Casa d'Industria in Milan is founded on the principle that the poor must not beg. If they are able to work, but are out of employ, it finds them and their families in work, either in their own homes or on the premises of this large establishment; if they are unable to work through ill health, it relieves and assists them at home; but in either case the liberty of

the poor is respected. They sleep out or in the house, they take their meals where they please; above all, they remain and live together — no bitter division of home ties reminds them that the rich may have affections, but that the poor must have no feelings.

In order not to compete ruinously with free work, and undo with one hand what is being done with the other, the *Pia Casa d'Industria* confines itself almost entirely to the weaving of linen and the making of mats.

This is rather a long digression from the relief of the poor in Sorrento, yet I have said little or nothing. The charities of Italy would fill a good-sized volume, and leave much unsaid. I may add that it would be a most beautiful and interesting history.

The religious education of the people is here, as it is everywhere, in the hands of the priests, and it is very carefully attended to; but beyond reading and writing for boys, and reading and knitting for girls, there is little education. One of the first things that struck me here, and that

showed me that, though 'fond of money, the Italians were neither good arithmeticians nor men of business, was the trouble they had in making up accounts, and the inconceivable blunders they committed about change, not merely with foreigners, but amongst themselves. I have seen several of them lingering a quarter of an hour over a piastre, unable to get to the bottom of the weighty matter; and in our own accounts I have been obliged to make it as clear as two and two make four that I was not cheating them before they felt thoroughly convinced they had their due.

Such education as there is, is general and open to all — cheap, but not always gratuitous. Private masters might easily supply public deficiencies, but salaries are low, and encouragement is lower. Two young priests who had nothing to do, and had plenty of will to work, lately thought to open a school, and impart some of the learning they had acquired in the seminary to their townsmen; but the Sorrentini did not care about learning, and the two knight-errants of knowledge had to carry their spirit of enterprise to the Piano of Sorrento.

The Jesuits are the most learned and the best preachers in Sorrento. Too sober and decorous to be popular, they draw a select audience to their quiet little church, and care for no more. The Franciscans are greater favourites. Vehement, fond of strong figures of speech, energetic in their gestures, and passionate in their appeals, they are made to sway the multitude. Their superior is a handsome and eloquent man, who speaks with mingled moderation and power. The Capuchins belong more to the Piano than to the town of Sorrento, and I have never heard them speak in public; but the great, the popular preacher of Sorrento is the curato of the Cathedral.

The curato is a strong, good humoured-looking man, of forty or so, who was once a merry young man, fond of playing on the flute in the streets of Sorrento. He entered the church late and suddenly, and rose rather rapidly to his present dignity. He has something like an income of forty pounds a-year to live on, and is held a comfortable man. He gives a good deal to the poor, spends on his church besides, and must keep but

little for himself. On that little he thrives wonderfully.

His preaching is simply talking to the congregation. He instructs them in religious dogma and morality, and uses the Sorrentino dialect and the conversational style. No flights of imagination, no pathos, no appeals to the feelings, interfere with his instructions. It is all clear common sense from beginning to end, with now and then a touch of the burlesque and more than a touch of satire; but all in close, terse speech, vigorous and free, which has both a style and a charm. A regular sermon the curate never preaches, and he takes care to say so.

"Children," he observed the other day, "if you want fine talking, flourishes, and dainty miniatures, do not come here, I have none for you. I tell you the truth in plain speech; expect no more from me."

Though duly warned, the people persist in coming. The sermons of the various preachers of Sorrento rank amongst the few pleasures of this little place. I could find but very faint traces of

evening parties. Countess — used, I was told, to see her friends now and then, and lemonade was handed round by way of refreshment, but she had long left off when we came to Sorrento. I asked Donna Anunziata if there was no going out in the evening, and no receiving of friends.

“No,” she replied; “every one stays at home, meglio così,” which seemed more prudent than sociable.

Between the priesthood and the peasantry there is a great social gap, which nothing appears to fill.

The cavaliers who keep shops keep distinct as cavaliers for all that. The shop-keepers are rarely above the peasants in education. The public officers are shamefully venal, and detested and despised by all classes. They take bribes openly. One of them once made a speech, which was repeated to me, and which paints the class. He was lamenting to a friend the stinginess of his customers.

“Who asks them to be always coming, piastre in hand?” he pathetically inquired; “but a piece

of veal, or even say sweets, would be acceptable!"

For a morsel of veal, for a dish of stewed fruit he was quite ready to sell the King's justice.

I need scarcely say that literary men and artists do not exist here. I once caught a sight of the doctor. He rode a stout donkey, and went about ordering bleedings, the favourite Italian remedy.

"It is so strengthening," said a lady to us; "only try it, and have eight ounces of blood taken from you!"

Such being the members of the Sorrento social world, it is easy to understand that the life, the activity of this little place, rest with the trading class, and that the business of their existence is to make money. Industrious, intelligent, and speculative, they deal in and do everything. They own vessels, they export and they import, they trade in silk, oil, lemons, and oranges, in drugs even; they are landowners, farmers, hotel and lodging-house keepers, and all at once, and in the smallest way, for capital is scarce and commerce is too limited

for any of its branches to yield a sufficient income. Partnerships are accordingly in favour. A furnished house will have two owners, who share equally, one for the house, another for the furniture. Even a bathing-machine is joint property. The carpenter who made it claims one half of the money you pay, the owner of the garden through which you go down to the seaside takes the other half for the right of passage. This system, which pervades all their little commerce, no doubt helps to cramp it, but it spreads comfort and prosperity over a large class of individuals; none are wealthy, — many are thriving.

The women are pretty much in the same position with the men. When they are ladies their life is retired, domestic, and dull. They marry, they enter a convent, or they become house-nuns; that is to say, they take the vows, but live at home like the virgins of the early church. But married women or nuns it seems that they must be. Of course in this populous country, where the families are large, every girl cannot marry, and it will often happen that she who cannot get a

husband or who will not take the one she can get, enters a convent and becomes a nun for the sake of having a position. Unconquerable, indeed, is the horror of Italian girls at remaining single in the world, where nothing awaits them save a life of restrictions that converts a house into a prison, and makes a convent a place of comparative freedom. I know one young girl, rich but plain, who, hating the idea of being married to a man who would take her for her money, and no less hating the prospect of remaining in the house that was to become her brother's one day, threatened to throw herself out of the window unless she were allowed to enter a monastery.

It is rather a pitiable case that single women should be considered and should consider themselves as only fit to be locked up for life; but setting aside the immorality of doing from worldly reasons what should never be done save from the highest and purest motives, it should not be forgotten by those who condemn this system that these Italian nuns are at least provided for. The poor girls who hunt for husbands for the sake of

a position until great writers proclaim to the world in bitter and eloquent pages their misery and their degradation; the wide and unhappy class of gently matured and educated women, who are flattered in the bloom of their youth, sneered at in its decline, made the butt of jests, more or less good natured, in their old age, who are handed about all their lives, the bore and burden of a family, who will teach your children for the sake of a home, who daily fill the columns of newspapers with their sad advertisements, and who are a living reproach to the society that gives them liberty and denies them its privileges, are here, either of them, unknown as a class.

Donna Anunziata, a pretty Sorrento girl, of eighteen, has given me on the important subject of marriages here, such precise information, that I shall give it in her own words, as the best illustration of Italian manners and habits, which differ so essentially from ours.

Donna Anunziata, as I said, is eighteen; she is short, and plump as a partridge; she has black hair, blue eyes, a Greek profile, white teeth, and

rosy cheeks. She is one of the prettiest girls in Sorrento, and has already had one or two broken matches since we have been here. She is very naïve, very innocent, very ignorant, and speaks more Sorrentino than Italian. I contrived, however, to understand her, and as her visit was not a short one, and as she was communicative, I learned all I wanted to know.

"How is a marriage conducted here?" I asked, in the course of our conversation.

Donna Anunziata opened her blue eyes at my ignorance, but replied in language more blunt than elegant; for, though well-born, she is ignorant, and she is naturally brusque.

"The mother of the young man goes to the mother of the young girl and says, 'I want this girl for my son.' The mother of the girl talks to her husband, the parents settle the money matters, and if the young people agree to it, it is a match."

This was rather brief; a little while afterwards she added, of her own accord: —

"I had a great deal more hair³ than that for-

merly; they say in Sorrento that when a girl is disappointed in marriage, she loses her hair; but I do not think so."

I agreed with her scepticism, and with a sigh Donna Anunziata soon added, giving a look at the mountains of Santa Agata, visible from our windows: —

"I was to have married up there, but I did not like the place."

"And that is a very important consideration in marriage," I suggested.

"The very first," she replied, solemnly.

The house was the first thing to think of; the husband came afterwards. I was amused at this lodger-like view of matrimony, but I remarked that if she had liked her betrothed, she would have borne even with Santa Agata. This was too romantic a flight for Italian matter-of-fact Donna Anunziata. She still struck to her original opinion.

"Choose your house well."

"Then you did not like your betrothed?" I could not help saying.

"Yes, I did," she replied, a little testily; "but

the Lord did not will it; it was not good for me, and in those things one must think of the soul," the beautiful blue eyes were turned up piously, "before the body."

"Poor lover!" I thought; "the house and the soul, comfort and religion have combined against you."

"He was a fine young man," resumed Donna Anunziata, with a little sigh; "tall!" her eyes emphatically sought the ceiling; "shoulders like that;" she opened her arms wide. "And such health! A wrist that size," she added, uniting the fore-fingers and thumbs of her two hands. "And so good," she continued, "as good as a piece of bread; (this expressive image is French as well as Italian; 'bon comme du pain,' is an old popular saying.) "He was so good, in short, that he never spoke. Not even a word did he say. He would sit and say nothing. They say he is bigger and handsomer than ever; but what do I care?"

But she could not drop the subject; the lost lover's size, bigness, beauty, silence, and goodness had evidently impressed Donna Anunziata. She

told me his name, Pietro, and his age, nineteen. He was very fond of her, and, spite his silence, had wasted away a good deal, perhaps through that sudden but fugitive wish of entering the cloister which Anunziata had manifested a few months back, on the death of her brother. Pietro, moreover, was always teasing his mother to bring Anunziata up to him at Santa Agata; and as the young lady always prudently declined the invitation, Pietro wept. Oh, yes! he was fond of her; no wonder; it had been going on a year; and their room was prepared in his mother's house. That mother, by the way, is a sort of ogress; she goes out with a stick and hunts in her sons before the Ave Maria, for parental authority is still strong and vigorous here. The marriage was agreed on, when the young girl's father thought it right to ask for a settlement, upon which they took the papers to examine them, went up to Santa Agata, and, as Anunziata naïvely expressed it, "they came down no more."

In short, it was a broken match.

Another lover soon made his appearance, "but

he too," says Donna Anunziata, "went away, and did not come back."

"Did you like him?" I asked.

"Oh! yes," she replied; but I heard nothing about his beauty.

A little while afterwards she added pensively: —

"They say in Sorrento that a girl never forgets first love."

"They say that in other places, too," I remarked.

"Yes, but they say it in Sorrento," she persisted, "and it is true."

"Why do you not marry in Sorrento itself?" I asked; the second lover was from Massa; "are there no young men here?"

"There are three," replied Donna Anunziata, with great quickness; "plenty of girls, but no men; only those *three*."

We spoke no more of marriage, and we parted that day to meet but once more in this world. Poor little Donna Anunziata! I little thought when I wrote down her conversation after she left, how

brief her history would be. She went home and took cold, sickened, was ill a year, and died a few weeks ago. I saw her before we left Sorrento; she was in bed, but getting better, she said; she wrote it to me when we were in Naples, always better she was getting, and she wasted away, still dreaming of recovery, I dare say, until concealment became impossible, and she was called back to la patria, as the friend who gave me the account of her death wrote in the pious Italian fashion. She was nineteen, beautiful, young, warm-hearted, innocent, and unstained, fit, in every sense, to die.

The restrictions which make solitude in the world painful to ladies do not apply with equal force to women of inferior rank; few of them, whether they marry or not, leave the world; they have plenty to do in it, and seem quite satisfied with their lot. Carmela, having had no broken matches, has given me but scanty information concerning popular courtships and marriages. The parents settle the match between themselves, and then refer to the young people; I need not say that in England the young people settle it first,

then refer to the old. However, compulsion is, I believe, quite out of the question. The marriage being agreed upon by all parties, it is solemnized either in the open day, a proceeding held shameless, barefaced, or at twilight, when the bride steals out to church, escorted by a few friends. She is dressed in her best, has plenty of chains and rings, and wears a gold spadella and flowers in her hair. We once met one of these decorous twilight brides, and very pretty and modest she looked, leaning on the arm of her father, who gravely scattered sugar-plums to the boys in the street. She was going to the cathedral, and the bride-groom was invisible.

In Rome they make sure of being never seen, by marrying at four in the morning, which must make the wedding-day feel rather tedious. The Sorrento sposa does not leave her new home for a week, during which she is all but invisible; after this she appears once more, and acts her usual part.

I am sorry to say that Italian wives are not very happy. Their husbands rarely trust or honour

them, they treat them like children, and are as jealous as Turks. An Italian wife rarely knows the price of anything, not even of meat or vegetables, for it is the man who buys, even in the middle-class. A Roman wife told me that when she married, she could not have five baiocchi without her husband's knowledge. He was kind and fond of her, but mistrustful and jealous. In Sorrento, and in all the south, it is still a rule that peasant women, though taught how to read, must not know how to write; the reason is obvious; if these frail and dangerous creatures knew how to write, they would indite love-letters at once.

But jealousy takes even more offensive a form than this impertinent mistrust, and foolish confidence in ignorance; I was once questioning Carmela concerning her aversion to marriage, which seemed remarkably strong. She replied with some warmth: —

“Signora, when you marry a man, he is fond of you, but after two or three years, he either begins to look at and talk to other women, or to beat you for jealousy.”

I thought she was exaggerating, but she gave me instances that startled me, and which other testimony confirmed, at least, so far as the jealousy went, for I need not say that the flirting which offended her so much is not peculiar to Sorrento. A young woman once went with her husband to a festa; she happened to look at another man; at once her husband took her home, and beat her till he was tired. The offended wife made a vow which she religiously kept: that never again would she go out with her husband. Repentance and entreaties availed him not; they never again appeared together out of their home.

I thought this rather outrageous for a look, but Carmela had a more incredible story to relate.

A widower married a middle-aged woman; from her marriage-day that woman never left her husband's house. There was a church opposite their door, and she never crossed the street to enter that church and hear mass; her husband went, and she stayed at home; and this had lasted something like twenty years. When Carmela mentioned the facts,

witnesses, who could not be mistaken, confirmed the story. The man was also harsh to his only son by a first wife, and was liked by no one; he was only an enriched peasant, but he had the spirit and the domestic tyranny of any feudal old Cenci. His wife must have stood in mortal fear of him, for he neither looked her up, nor stayed within to watch her. His will was stronger than bolts or bars, and imprisoned her like gates of adamant.

These are, of course, extreme cases, but Carmela generalized remorselessly, and concluded her account of the male sex with the following simile, more poetic than charitable.

She took an apple from the table, and said, impressively: —

"A man is like this apple; he is fair and smooth without, but there is a worm within."

Yet, for all Carmela may think, the women of the people seem happier to me than the ladies, who are prisoners at large, and bound hand and foot by decorum; and infinitely happier in many respects are both the men and the women of the

people than the more educated men and women above them.

Their life is hard indeed; and if provisions are cheap, so is labour; but Providence tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. Intemperance is rare, abstemiousness is habitual. When people drink water, and make a hearty meal on a melon that costs a penny — and when, what is more wonderful, they work hard and live to ninety on such diet, it is not surprising that starvation should be unknown. Of their clothing I do not speak. I cannot help thinking that — in their opinion, at least — a woollen cap for the men, a silver pin for the women, are its two essential articles. These being provided, they shift as well as they can for the rest.

Small shopkeepers, farmers, day-labourers, fishermen, and boatmen, differ in their occupations and in their degree of wealth, but very little in the main features of their character. Of that character it is very difficult to speak. Their vices are known at once. They cheat, they lie, they flatter, and all most impudently. To know their virtues, one must

live amongst them. Their sobriety is proverbial. They get less credit for their industry, which is amazing. There must be wonderful virtue in the constant repetition of an untruth, or Italian laziness would not have become a shameless by-word — shameless and most untrue. I believe it was Pascal who wittily said, "If anyone were to accuse me of having pocketed the two towers of Notre Dame, I should begin by running away." And if I were an Italian, and had heard half of what is said in flourishing and prosperous countries concerning Italian *far niente*, I should give up all idea of justification in despair.

No one denies that the Romans were great workers, the barbarians who succeeded them were energetic, and the mixed race who sprang from the union of the old people and the new were the most indefatigable of men. Of their genius, of their scientific skill, of all they did for commerce and art, I do not speak. The names of the Italian republics command the whole of the middle ages. Wherever we turn, we see the fleets of Venice, Pisa, or Genoa; whenever we pause to listen, we

hear the voices of merchant princes mingling in the councils of European states. This is world-known; but what is not so well known, because it requires to be seen, is the amount of labour which, without the aid of ancient slavery, the Italians spread over their land. Every city is a capital adorned with magnificent edifices, of which any empire might be proud. Every town, in its churches, convents, hospitals, and palaces, displays a wealth and dignity which completely eclipse the country towns of England, and even of France. In short, labour is written on the surface of the land in language which no one can feign to misunderstand. It is true that England and France, tired of purchasing the mirrors of Venice, the steel of Milan, and the silks of Genoa, began manufacturing at home — it is true that, when her neighbours began to work, Italy could not insist on working for them, that she lost the best part of her foreign commerce, and with it her vast income.

Loss of custom is everywhere synonymous with ruin; and when there are several competitors in the field, one at least must perish. Italy was worn and

exhausted, like a fruitful soil that has yielded twice in one season. Her rivals were eager and ardent — they had never worked, and all their energy was in their task. The old land grew weak as they grew strong — political changes and divisions helped her decline — she bought where she once had sold, and became what she is now. But what has idleness to do with this decay? When the Italians do not work, it is for a very sad and excellent reason — that they have nothing to do. Enterprise is dead, that is true enough, and it is dead because capital is scarce and success is doubtful; and no man and no people, without a fair prospect of profit in the end, will embark in speculation. Where an Italian has a chance of earning, he works with the hardest will I ever saw.

Thousands of mountaineers come down from the hills every season to till the unhealthy campagna around Rome. Many die, but they will be as numerous next year as they are this. The Sorrentini are indefatigable — from morning till night men and women work, with barely an hour's rest at noonday; and I have seen here, what I never

saw out of Italy, women helping men to pave the streets and the masons to build houses. As to not working when they have nothing to do, who can blame them for it?

As strange seems to persons who know the Italians the reproach of overflowing imagination and artistic flights, which popular prejudices take the right of fixing on Italy, converting her close calculating sons and daughters into an unthrifty, romantic race, feeding on art. The following passage in the popular novel, "Two years ago," is a very fair specimen of this feeling: —

"It is a credit to any man to feel for any human being; and Italy, as she is at this moment, is certainly one of the most tragic spectacles which the world has ever seen. Elsley need not be blamed for pitying her, only for holding, with most of our poets, a vague notion that her woes were to be cured by a hair of the dog who bit her — namely, by homœopathic doses of that same art which has been all along her morbid and self-deceiving substitute for virtue and industry. So

as she had sung herself down to the nether pit, Elsley would help to sing her up again." *

I believe the opinions expressed in the above passage embody very correctly the popular feeling concerning Italy and the Italians. Because the Italians are an artistic people and excel in music, there exists in the popular mind a floating myth of a handsome, whiskered Italian who sings charmingly, plays on the guitar, and has done nothing else from time immemorial. "Art," we are told, "has all along been Italy's morbid and self-deceiving substitute for virtue and industry," which means that Italy became a great commercial nation, carried on vast trade, and amassed immense wealth, by writing sonnets and painting pictures. This does not seem very likely, and it is not requisite to refer to history in order to know that Italy took the usual means to make money; she worked hard for it and made art as much a substitute for industry as England and America do just now. She was indeed singular in this: that, great in commerce, she was also great in every art and science, but the fertility

* "Two Years Ago."

of her genius cannot detract from the gravity of her history; her arts were the reward of her toil and the fruit of her luxury. The sonnets of Petrarca, the *Commedia* of Dante, the *Gerusalemme* of Tasso, no more acted as substitutes for industry in Italy than the dramas of Shakespeare and Milton's "*Paradise Lost*" in England. The merchant sent forth his ships or counted his gold in his marble palace, and the poet sang in the valley of *Vaucluse*, in the exile of *Ravenna*, or in the dungeon of *Ferrara*, but what had one to do with the other, save that commerce throve best, and that poetry was sweetest, when the country was prosperous and free?

As to singing herself down to the nether pit, Italy took a less swan-like and a surer way to help her natural decay and work her own destruction. Nothing so sweet as song, so effeminate as art, wrought her miserable ruin. The greediness which lies at the heart of great commercial communities, the pitiless jealousy of the trader, roused city against city; sanguinary battles, fierce revenge, perfidious hate, disgrace the annals of every Italian

state; and if, in these intestine divisions, so cruel, so relentless, does not lie the only cause of Italy's present condition, no one denies that they have helped to make her what she is. "A tragic spectacle," indeed; yet perhaps not so really tragic as an Irish famine and an English workhouse. Political enslavement is degrading, but starvation is a step lower down to "the nether pit."

What the Italians were in former times they are still in temper, though no more in fortune. They work as hard as people can work in a country which enterprise has forsaken; they are rather fonder of money than is good for the souls of any people, and though they have the artistic feeling which is the gift of their race, and which makes them adapt readily poetic speech and cling to poetic customs, they practise very little poetry.

A correct ear, a good voice, a slight skill on the guitar or mandoline are common enough amongst the people; but the great Italian singers are heard best in London or Paris. The *prima donna* at La Scala, when we were in Milan, was an American, and an Englishwoman was the great singer at

Florence when we visited that city. I doubt, moreover, if from the Alps to the extreme point of the Italian boot, there are half as many musical young ladies as in London. It is not usual here to study arts in which the student does not expect to excel. This is very matter-of-fact, and excludes a good deal of innocent pleasure from life, but the truth is, though the world will not believe it, that the Italians are by temper a matter-of-fact people.

A great deal more matter-of-fact they would be but for their strong religious feeling and deep faith. An Italian priest told me once that there are plenty of secret deists in the middle class, who read French novels and are charmed by Eugène Sue; but among the people there are none. There are plenty of publicans, but no infidels. The first symptom of their faith which struck me was a profound resignation to the will of God. I have seen them under calamity and sorrow, calm and almost content. "It is the will of God," "The Lord chastises us," seemed sufficient comfort. This is a beautiful feeling, but they certainly apply it oddly now and then. Our servant once laid astray

the key of the kitchen, and there was no getting the dinner ready. "It is the will of God, Signorina," she said resignedly, and without looking for it, she went and did something else. I argued that Providence required her, on the contrary, to look for the missing key, and after a little search, it was found.

A certain solemnity of speech is the natural result of this entire faith. I was once at Carmela's house when the silkworms were at their worst. An ancient gossip of the family was there, too. As she rose to leave, she leaned on her cane, and, extending her right hand towards the baskets full of diseased worms, she said, with unfeigned earnestness: —

"La mia mano vi benedice (my hand blesses you)!"

I am not sure, however, that her feeling was all religious. There had been some previous talk of the virtue of hands; and I had been told of certain lucky hands that made everything thrive they touched.

The comare's hand, however, must not have

been a lucky one, for the worms died all the same.

This religious feeling, when it is really religious, ennobles many who sadly want to be ennobled. I know no positive harm of Benedetto, but he is full of wily tricks, which leave a very unpleasant impression behind, and which caused an agreeable though rather hasty English clergyman to call him to us "a scamp and vagabond," English epithets which Benedetto, having a suspicion of their Italian meaning, heard, cap in hand, but with an awkward smile. Poor Benedetto has to live by many trades, and a man's principles are apt to get loose when his occupations vary too much. However that may be, and simply premising that he is no pattern of perfection, I shall give two of his speeches.

Not knowing his circumstances, I once asked him if he had a vineyard of his own?

"A vineyard!" he replied, smiling. "Signora, men like me, who have neither house nor land, drink wine and eat meat twice a-year — at Christmas and Easter."

"Then what is your usual food?" I inquired.

"I have tasted nothing to-day," he replied.
"At one I shall have a dish of beans."

"You thrive upon it," I could not help saying.

Benedetto smiled, and raised his hand with that Italian majesty and loftiness which made the Roman Minente declare that, when his donkey had his saddle on, he looked like Cicero!

"Signora," said our marinaro, "the Padrone del Ciel, the Master of Heaven, blesses the poor man's food. If I had nothing but that to eat," he added, taking up a pebble from the garden, and biting it with a zeal that made me shiver, "the Lord would make me thrive upon it."

And as Benedetto said, so he meant. He trusted in God, as they all do here, with the faith of a child. He was married then; and when we returned to Sorrento this last time, I inquired after his wife, not knowing that she was dead. His reply was a model of laconism and pantomime. He smiled, shook his head, and pointed downwards with his fore-finger; then gently raising his hand, he pointed to heaven. There was no mistaking his

meaning. His wife was dead and buried, but her soul, Benedetto piously hoped, was with her Maker.

These are mere symptoms of feeling — mere externals — and worth no more than externals all the world over. But religion has other and surer tests. Has anyone ever studied attentively Italian charity? Not mere almsgiving, but love of the poor, — but a gentleness and a forbearance they rarely find elsewhere. Most travellers complain of the persecutions they endure from Italian beggars, in Rome especially — very few take the trouble of ascertaining that there is no city where so much is done for the poor as in Rome.

Her hospitals are not merely numerous and magnificent; they are often the earliest of their kind. The lying-in hospital of San Rocco was the first merciful refuge opened to sin, which finds so little mercy from man. The first penitentiary owes its existence to the Pope Clement XI., who had one built as early as 1703. It was in the sixteenth century that St. Philip of Neri founded the first hospital for convalescents; and it was in 1198 that Innocent III. made the Hospital dello

Spirito Santo, an asylum for foundlings. With a world of trouble, St. Vincent of Paul accomplished the same work of mercy five centuries later, in Paris. The London Foundling is still more recent.

But as the French traveller, from whose pages I borrow these dates, observes very justly: "Rome is satisfied with doing the good — she leaves the boasting to other nations." If, notwithstanding these numerous asylums and abundant alms, beggars still encumber the streets of Rome, it is because, in her mercy, she will deprive none of God's children of liberty. Better have the rich annoyed than the poor locked up. To poverty add a prison, and you make life a curse indeed. The spirit of their institutions is carried out by the Roman people. I never saw a beggar rudely repulsed in Rome but once, and it was by a Swiss jeweller. A Roman would not have done it.

One day a poor woman, with a troop of children, followed us into the shop of a mosaic merchant on the Piazza di Spagna, and was so importunate that we could look at nothing. The shopkeeper was annoyed, and stepping between us

and her, he pushed her out gently; but as he closed the door, she turned upon him sorrowful and indignant.

"You shut the door in my face," she exclaimed; "you treat me like a dog!"

The shop-keeper justified himself with the greatest gentleness.

"Figlia mia, my daughter;" he said, "have patience; just reflect, that when you follow people in, and prevent them from looking at my wares, you prevent me from selling."

Spite this moderate reply, the woman went away murmuring.

Just fancy, kind reader, a beggar-woman following a lady into a shop in Regent or Oxford Street, and being dismissed by the shop-keeper with excuses and arguments. This, and traits like this, much more than even the generous institutions and abundant alms, show Italian charity; for if charitable asylums are more numerous in Rome than in other Italian cities, everywhere there is the same patient spirit, the same forbearance. The door of Carmela's home is besieged by beggars;

they knock at it with lamentable petitions the whole day long. It rarely remains closed upon them, and more rarely opens to give them a denial. Still it sometimes happens that there are no fallen oranges, no remains of the noonday meal to bestow, but the ungracious "there is nothing for you," is never uttered by Carmela. "Have patience," she says; gently, and with more regret in her look and tone than the beggar whom she dismisses.

This is the common form of charity; but there is a form of charity which, without being peculiar to the kingdom of Naples, prevails in it to a great extent; the adoption of children by the poor. A few years ago, a foreigner entered the house of a poor Neapolitan woman, and found, what is common enough in that populous country, a houseful of children.

"Are they all yours?" he asked.

"All save these two," she replied. "They are children of the Madonna."

Which meant, that having lost two of her own children, the poor woman, in violation of all the sound principles of political economy, had picked

up these two little strangers, and replaced her dead darlings by the offspring, for all she knew, of vice and crime.

But thus do not reason 'the ignorant poor of Naples. They do not trouble themselves about the earthly parents these children may have had. The purest of virgins, the mildest of mothers, is the mother of the forsaken ones; they are the very children of God, the very brothers and sisters of Christ, and it must not be supposed that these children are not as kindly treated, as tenderly loved, as if they were the flesh and blood of their adoptive parents.

The first time we came to Sorrento, we knew and admired, as every one who approached her could not but admire, a blind and venerable old peasant woman, who, spite her eighty odd years, preserved a countenance of great sweetness and remarkable beauty. Goodness and piety were written in her face, and I was not surprised to hear that she had been a woman of charity and good deeds. She had many children, two were daughters; both were loved, but there was a tenderness for the

elder one which she could not conceal, and which that daughter devotedly returned. Maria was what the Duchess of Angoulême was said by Napoleon to be in the family of the Bourbons. She was the man of the family; they all looked up to her with respect; they all attributed to her exertions and zeal their worldly prosperity. Her nephews called her aunt; her sister they disrespectfully called Maddalena; and this favourite daughter and respected aunt was a foundling, adopted on the loss of a child; she was beloved as that child might have been; she enjoyed her share of the inheritance which her adopted father had left behind him; there was not a shadow of difference made between her and the real children, save that she was, perhaps, more favoured, more beloved. I confess I was surprised as well as moved when I accidentally learned the truth, but surprise or emotion is the last feeling such occurrences create here; they are not merely too common, but they are too natural, too congenial to the temper and manners of the people to astonish. It is not always, indeed, that parents, on losing their children, go and adopt

other children in their stead, but when they do so, no more is thought of it than when solitary and bereaved parents with us send for some young niece or cousin to share their home. One need not remark how different is the motive in either case; in one it is charity and love of God; in the other, personal gratification.

These are the virtues which are not seen at once by persons who are quick to discover Italian dirt, which is undeniable, and prompt to rail at Italian dishonesty, which is, indeed, a great deal too common.

The Sorrentini, however, bear a very fair name; there is plenty of pilfering, but robbery is rare; housebreaking is almost unknown. The only instance I ever heard of showed Maria to be a heroine. The barking of the dogs woke her at night. She got up, went to an outhouse where she kept her bacon, and found two young thieves in the act of bearing it off. She seized the first thing she found at hand, it happened to be a stout stick, and administered such vigorous blows that the two thieves dropped the bacon and escaped through the window

by which they had entered. Maria had recognized one of the youths, she went and lodged a complaint against him before the police, but of what use is the police here? The officer who was commissioned to examine the delinquent's person, and find upon it the trace of Maria's blows, was bribed, and declared that the lad had never been beaten! The thief was let off, but was caught another time in another act, and made a full confession, in which he included his affair with Maria.

When we first came to Sorrento, a murder had never been heard of in the place; but this second time the prison has received a sad tenant, a murderess of eighteen. I saw her the other day at her grated window, a stout, florid girl, with hard, black eyes, and a surly look. There is no doubt of her crime, and none of her fate. She belongs to the Piano; she was in love with a married man, who had three children. She found no better way to get rid of the wife than to throw her over the bridge which spans the valley. A child saw all, and betrayed her; but frightful as was this crime, it was committed for passion, not for money; how-

ever common mercenary murders may be in Naples, they are unheard of here. The temper too is better; the knife is rarely or never used. The people are good humoured, and incapable, it seemed to me, of bitterness or hate. They have the easy manners and the freedom from all vulgarity which seem the privilege of the Italian race. But their chief characteristic, from the beginning to the end, from the first to the last, from the prince to the peasant, is to be natural. Give them every vice, they will still preserve that virtue.

For a virtue it surely is — one which does not seem to be sufficiently appreciated in the Italians, yet which is visible enough to unprejudiced observers. Indeed, there is nothing more remarkable in the character of the people here, and in their social condition, than the contrasts between Italian virtues and vices and the same virtues and vices elsewhere — than the difference between their civilization and the civilization of more flourishing countries.

A Swiss lady, who had spent half her life in Italy, once told me that she liked the Italians

"because they were so ingenuous." This is not exactly the name they bear; but a short acquaintance with the Italians made me understand the Swiss lady's meaning. She had found the Italians natural; and with the instinct of a correct mind, she could not separate nature from truth.

Why do we — or rather, why will we — so obstinately forget that truth has two aspects — the rigid and the real? That we may be very true in our yea and nay, and false in our assumptions of position, money, and influence? Is not society in England built on such assumptions, and does not society in France follow fast? Who does not there strive to seem more than he is? Who dare rest on the simple truth, when the truth happens to be poverty, or to wear the aspect of an inferior station? Is not shabby attire or a lodging on a second-floor a stigma more indelible than debts and bankruptcy? And is not this life of show and pretence daily practised by men and women who would be horrified at being caught in a lie? — who, when they come to Italy, are shocked at seeing other men and women, their equals perhaps, never stopping at an

untruth when convenient, and who do not remember or choose to see that these same men and women are ingenuous and true in a hundred things in which they are false and hollow?

All untruths are bad, acted or spoken; but the acted untruth has a meanness and a continuousness from which that spoken is free. To try and believe that one is not at least as hateful as the other in the sight of God, and as despicable in the sight of man, is no more and no better than a whitening of the sepulchre — fair without, foul within.

Thus, too, with Italian ignorance, with Italian oppression, with Italian inferiority in the scale of modern civilization. Ignorant, oppressed, inferior are the Italians, if you like, but not exactly nor certainly so much as people are pleased to say. It is a pity, before they are condemned, that we are not first informed in what the education, liberty, and civilization of a people consist. Let the law be laid before the judgment is pronounced — the standard fixed before the comparison is made.

The middle ages are still strong in Italy. Her nineteenth century is yet in the womb of time. She has still the crimes, the vices, and the virtues of an era which we buried long ago. Feudalism has perished, and railroads are beginning, but the relics of the past are too strong to be denied. The great faith united to passions that lead to great excesses, the *naïveté* of speech and manners, the profound ignorance of history, geography, and all that goes beyond the narrowest circle, the scarcity of books, and the scantiness of literary knowledge and many features which I cannot enumerate, all belong to past ages, and show us not merely what Italy is, but, in a great measure, what our ancestors have been.

Indeed, the disadvantages under which Italy labours are not unconditional. Like truth, they have more than one aspect; and in comparing this country to other countries, it is the merest delusion of national pride and vanity to look fixedly at that which is favourable and to turn away from that which is condemning.

Commercial prosperity, and the luxuries it

brings, may pass for civilization in the eyes of many, but no earnest mind can see the vices, the crimes that come with them, and think so. Political rights are good, but they are not the whole of liberty, for experience shows that society can be more pitiless to the weak than despotism. Above all, the intellectual activity of a great nation, shown in perfect liberty of the press, in papers daily and weekly, in numberless publications on every subject the mind can conceive, in works that live with a language, is a noble thing, but it must not be confounded with the education of a people.

To these objections there is an invariable answer ready, "This evil is the inevitable consequence of so much good; it is the price we must pay." And this making a necessity of an evil that need never have been is the saddest delusion of all. But admitting, for the sake of argument, that civilization is the parent of vice, that liberty breeds social oppression, that education engenders the ignorance of right, there is still this to say, "Before you condemn abroad, look at home. Take the

beam out of your own eye before you trouble yourself with the mote in your neighbour's."

Ignorance is deep in Italy, and doubly deep in the Southern States. It embraces everything — ancient knowledge, modern inventions — and it displays itself in a form that is both painful and amusing.

An abyss divides the ignorant from the educated. That wide and powerful class who, in England, know neither Greek nor Latin, but who are familiar with the knowledge and the literature of the day, who can understand works of science, and who amuse themselves with works of fiction, is unknown here. It is all ignorance or all knowledge, and between those who cannot and will not read, and those who are past mere reading, and to whom books are the means of study and deeper meditation, there is a gap which nothing save liberty of the press can ever fill up. One of the first facts that struck me in Sorrento was, that in a town where there was an archbishop and a seminary, there should not be one bookseller's shop, and that, where I could get no books, I should

find men gifted with keen and brilliant intellects, and possessing a range of acquirements rare in any land.

But this ignorance, though lamentable, must not be confounded with the ignorance of countries that boast of a higher civilization than poor, fallen, oppressed Italy. Is there in all Italy a child not an idiot — who has never heard that there is a God? — such a child as every one has heard of at home — as I, for one, have spoken with? — a child who will grow into youth and never know that Jesus Christ was born, lived, and died for his redemption? — who will reach the years of reason in worse than heathen ignorance, an animal in his instincts, a man in his vices?

Travellers take home strange tales of Italian banditti, who wear crucifixes and say their rosary — pious Protestants at home are shocked, and think it dreadful that people should try to reconcile religion and crime. Dreadful it is, no doubt, that men should know good, do evil, and hope to patch up a life-time of wickedness with a death-bed repentance; but to deprive them of that

hope lies not within the province of man. He alone who has sounded the breadth and the depth of the Divine mercy is their Judge. But if to know right deepens their crime, does it not lessen that of society? When her avenging hand reaches them they cannot appeal from this world's judgment to the great day in the next — they cannot say, "If we had known better, should we be what we are?" Through her priesthood, she made them know what was right; and so far as religious knowledge goes — for, of course, the causes of crime are many — the sin be on their own heads if they did wrong.

This ignorance — intellectual, not Pagan — is the happiness and the bane of the southern states — it keeps the people what they are, and makes them happy as they are. I have no wish to speak of Italian politics — I leave it to those whose inclination leads them to such things to reveal to the world a future that depends on a hundred accidents human wisdom can scarcely foresee, and which, above all, still lies closed and hidden within the Almighty's hand. But this much I can

safely say — political opinions the people here have none. Of a united Italy, republican or monarchical, they do not dream. Northern Italy is to them a remote, unknown land — they neither like nor dislike it — they know nothing about it. Their patriotism scarcely goes beyond the limits of their birth-place, and rarely passes the frontiers of the state. Question them and their complaints will never rise higher than the weight of the taxes, if they are rich enough to pay taxes, the disagreeable necessity of bribing the law, corruption is exacted and practised most shamelessly, and the price of provisions if they are poor.

Political rights are to them words devoid of meaning. *Panem et Circenses*, give them bread and festas; let food be cheap, and holydays frequent, they ask for no more.

This is a low state of feeling, yet why censure this people? What does the cry for political rights mean all the world over? It implies the existence of great wrongs, and here the people, as a class, are anything but oppressed. There is no cry against landlords and masters, for land is divided by in-

heritance, and commerce is not strong enough to crush the weak. The rich and the strong of the land do not sit assembled in Senate to make laws for a class who, whether right or wrong, matters not — consider those laws tyrannic and odious, and burn with hate against their rulers. The nobles have none of those substantial privileges which may fairly be considered as grievances; the power of the church is her influence — wealthy she is not. Social freedom compensates for the absence of political liberty.

The game laws are mild, and not much observed. The peasant can take his gun and go out for a day's shooting as well as the prince. No haggard poacher haunts the recesses of the mountains, and ends by helping to fill the ranks of the galley slaves. The beggar sits in the sun, unmolested by the polizia; he kneels in the church by the side of the daintiest lady, unawed by pews, beadles, and respectability. When he wants food he goes to the gates of the convent, and receives it without the fear of being captured and locked up in the monk's cell. His wife will persecute

you for a grano, his children will handle your garments and pull your cloak, like beings of one race with yourself. They may want occasionally; but starvation, as I have already said, is unknown.

“Our people would not bear hunger,” said an Italian liberal to me; “the least rise in provisions brings on a riot.”

The fertility of the country, the mildness of the climate, soften the hardships of poverty. The poor need not much care about the misery of their homes, when they live in the open air, and when the street and the sun are as free to them as to the rich. They are wretched and degraded, it is true, for poverty is wretched and degrading all the world over, but it should never be forgotten that they are not in this land of despotism what they would be in lands of liberty and civilization — the lepers of society, nay, if one may judge by the laws made against them — its born enemies. Nor have the popular classes here the same feelings that animate them there; the same angry cry for justice, the same lurking resentment, of which the

far-sighted prophesy with dread and terror the fatal outbreak.

For man to care for political rights, he must either have knowledge teach to him to love right for its own sake, or he must suffer from despotism in order to hate it. Whilst the people here are ignorant, physically happy and socially free, they will not care for political dignity and liberty. From them no revolution will come; mad should they be, indeed, to make one for the benefit of the middle-class, whose dominion would probably prove far more oppressive to them than that of a government whose policy it is to keep them in good humour; and revolutions are the children of great wrongs or keen sufferings; declamations, theories, books, pamphlets, may fan the flame, they cannot kindle it in the hearts of a people.

FIFTH CHAPTER.

Italian Landscape.

GAY people have pronounced a summer in Sorrento dreadfully dull. It certainly does not offer the pleasures of Brighton, Margate, or Boulogne. It has no public amusements, no society; nothing but its beauty; its splendid views for artists, amateur or professional, and its rides in the mountains and sea-baths for all. Persons who go to spend a few days in a hotel often meet their friends, and have the pleasure of talking Paris or London gossip in orange-gardens washed by the Mediterranean, but it does not often happen that two families spend a summer in Sorrento, and it is for these exiles from animated watering-places, that Sorrento may be considered a dull residence.

I do not know how others feel and manage; walks, drawing, and a few books were all we had; yet never has summer seemed so delightful and so brief. The lightness of the air, and the brightness

of everything seem to me to breathe happy cheerfulness and the spirit of content.

The Sorrentini say of their native air that it would give life to the dead — it certainly doubles the sense of life to the living. The scenery, to which I have already alluded so often, is extremely beautiful, but it has other characteristics besides beauty — characteristics which are impressed on the whole Italian landscape, and which must have a strong effect on the mind: — Colour and distinctness, both of which command, seize, and retain attention. We look long at, and we feel strongly, that which we see well; and we see nothing well that is not vivid in colour or clear in outline.

Light literally paints in Italy — every object is drawn in keen lines, in strong colours. Every landscape has a definite existence — every scene we gaze on unites distinctness to incomparable softness. And this is why, no doubt, Italy is so beautiful. Her skies, so serene and so pure, smile on her most barren deserts, and make them lovely to the eye. Lines of golden light define the un-

dulations of the sun-burnt campagna — an ardent sun has baked into glowing red or mellow brown the Roman ruin. The cloudlessness of a summer sky dies to celestial blue the placid seas that sleep in the bay of Naples. The perpetual brightness of the day gives southern verdure its charm and its beauty.

“Give us the sun,” the north might say, “and we will find you plains as vast and as majestic as the Roman. Our quaint red-brick walls and tiled roofs will replace the ruin, our seas will be as azure, and not so monotonous, as the tideless lake of the Mediterranean, our hawthorn hedges and parks of oak will be as green and as fragrant as orange-groves and myrtle-covered shores.”

True enough; but with a sickly yellow sun, with heavy skies and lowering horizons, it is folly to compare the most beautiful lands that lie north of the Alps with the glorious country that reaches far into the Southern Sea.

Two Italian scenes, seen years ago, I remember to this hour with a vividness that brings them

back at my call like the spots I gaze on to-day and am to see to-morrow.

The first was in Venice. I had, like every one, longed to see this famous city, and the gratification of the wish had only bred disappointment. The palaces were dingy, the wind felt chill and bleak, the Venetians were not like Titians and Giorgiones. St. Mark, indeed, was magnificent; but no general sense of pleasure made objects wear a brighter look, or predisposed the mind to agreeable sensations.

We had left the more open places, and our little black gondola entered a dark and narrow canaletto. It was very silent — the warning cry of the gondoliers and the splash of the oar alone disturbed that stillness. It was very tranquil, too — an out-of-the-way place, where shadows had crept and hidden in corners, and fallen asleep there for ever. The day was fine, but houses rose high on either side, and cut out, with an edge of dark brown, the pure blue of the sky. Below lay the water, green and sluggish — it washed, with a faint eddy, gloomy walls, that

seemed to sink fathoms deep, and to which clung dull, slimy weeds.

To our left rose a stately palace, but sadly decayed and entirely deserted. The windows were blank holes, that opened into vast and vacant rooms. No gate closed the high arch or guarded the court into which the dark water flowed. The very boards which had been thrown up to protect it once had rotted away and not been replaced. A rat swam past us, and climbed up a pair of steps, and vanished in a hole in the wall. To our right, in a high, blank wall, I saw one narrow Moorish window, adorned with a red rag, hung out to dry, and a flower-pot, just touched with a warm and brilliant sunbeam. At the angle of the wall, there was a piazza, with a church, and two or three boys sitting at the foot of a statue.

We went by — the palace was succeeded by other palaces; other walls, and Moorish windows, and tranquil piazzas followed; but a picture, not beautiful nor even pleasing, but clear as light, distinct and vivid as a sight ever present, remained behind. Yet it was almost all dark; the

red rag and flower-pot alone were lit. True, it was the clear, transparent darkness of an Italian noon. I take "darkness" for the want of a better word — *chiaroscuro*, I suppose it should be; but in this darkness every object was more visible than in the greyness of an English day; and this is what I mean by saying that light paints in Italy.

Some months later, in March, and at the dawn of spring, we were in Rome, and we went for a drive along the Appian way. A burning sun lit that barren campagna and that long road which the tombs of the Romans still guard. A far line of aqueducts rose behind the undulations of the vast plain that washed like a green sea the base of purple hills. We stopped and alighted on reaching the tomb of Cecilia Metella. The broad round tower, yellow as pale gold, rose from a mass of green things; bushes and creeping plants hung from a deep gap in the wall. It was a fortress in the middle ages. Around the fortress gathered a few villagers, and with the villagers, came a church.

The fortress has turned back into a vacant and solitary tomb — village and villagers are gone — the very church, when we saw it, stood a grey and roofless ruin, looking sadly at the tomb of the Roman lady that outlasts them all. We crossed a field, we entered an enclosure, we stood in what had been a circus. Brown stones raised the soil, and lay scattered on the earth; everywhere grass grew green and thick; violets, wood anemones, daisies filled the place; a flock of sheep was grazing in the sun. I saw no shepherd, song of bird I did not hear, the very wind was quiet. There was nothing but the wide plain, the hills, an enclosure called a circus, the grazing sheep, hard by the tomb of Cecilia Metella and the Appian way, and over all a noonday sun pervading with light every object, defining it in clear airy outlines, with scarcely the aid of one shadow. It was the very reverse of the picture in Venice, and here, no more than there, was there much beauty. In both places, the same effect was produced by different means — perfect distinctness.

I have seen beautiful places in other countries,

but a sort of vagueness blends with their beauty. They have left me many impressions, and, with one exception, no exact pictures.

The exception I allude to was at Chamouni. We had reached the Montanvert, and we sat down by the Mer de Glace. Grey and savage peaks pierced the clouds of a grey sky. Torrents fell like foam down granite rocks, and now and then there was a rolling sound as of thunder. A frozen flood, a broad defile of ice and snow, wound up between the mountains, and was lost there. Daisies grew on the edge of the ice; and the Alpine rose, which will not bloom in the valley, filled with its exquisite fragrance the chill air of that dreary solitude. The whole spot was distinct enough, and never to be forgotten; but the excess of its sternness, the awe with which it filled the very heart of the beholder, these impressed it on the mind, and made it live there as a remembered dread. The distinctness of an Italian landscape does not depend on the vague terror or on the rapture of delight it awakens — it is the distinctness of so many facts, and, as I said before, you

remember long, and you must needs feel strongly, what you see well.

This distinctness of the scenery, its light, and also its grace, seem to me reflected in the national character and literature. In their customs and language, the Italians are graceful and poetic, like their scenery; but they are clear, keen, and positive, like it, in their feelings and in their actions. They may seem careless and indolent, but I always found them quite aware of what they were about. There is a meaning in their very carelessness which duller northern minds cannot always apprehend. In good and in evil they are fine to an excess — their sensations are acute, not because they are romantic, but because life flows swiftly through them like light through their skies. Passion, indeed, may carry them away with furious force, but once its tide has gone by, the Italian returns to that masterdom of himself which is his greatness — which may be called one of his chief characteristics, and which often tempts and leads him into duplicity.

These traits, which the national character possesses in common with the national landscape, also show themselves very strongly in the taste for landscape which Italians display. In his delightful chapter on modern landscape, Mr. Ruskin has touched on a very interesting subject, and made it impossible to say again what he has said better than anyone can say it. I shall merely allude to the remarks he makes with regard to the tame landscapes, as we would call them, in which the ancients delighted, and to the sort of dislike with which the mediævals considered mountains. I have found these two feelings very strong amongst the Italians. They are still heathens or middle-age men.

Every age, every literature, has its fashion for scenery. There is no doubt that our modern love of scenery is half acquired. A frank Irish gentleman, speaking of Chamouni, told me that it could only be vanity led people to so dreary and ugly a place — "only the wish of saying I have been there."

We certainly rave about what our ancestors

detested. The ancient landscape is essentially calm; serenity breathes from the pages of Virgil. Dante described mountain and tempest, but how easily we see his delight in peaceful scenes. Shakespeare has painted wild and rugged scenery with a master-hand, but with the same impartiality with which he painted his tragic characters. He no more loved the Cliff of Dover than he loved Lady Macbeth. He seems to have more sympathy with the sweetness of English woodlands. Very soft is the wildness that comes in French descriptive literature with Fenelon. It is slightly artificial, and belongs perhaps as much to Poussin as to observation of nature. Rousseau, reared in a region of mountains, and born with the passion of wildness, drew more rugged scenes; and, spite the gardens of Versailles, is said to have invented mountain-scenery, in France at least. To mountains, Macpherson's Ossian, which acquired sudden and wide popularity, added mist and bleak heath. Other writers came, and blended these materials according to the bent of their genius. Some, like Bernardin

de Saint Pierre, added the glow and the luxuriance of the tropics, and the modern admiration for grandeur, wildness, and solitude, genuine in some, but fictitious in many, was made good.

Thus have we learned to love the wild heath, the barren peak, the cold, grey lake and the barrier of mountain and mist which, to our predecessors, were objects of aversion; but no Italian that I ever met with really liked mountain scenery; none that I ever spoke to but talked of the mountains, of their gloom, of their wildness and barrenness, with a feeling of dislike and contempt. They know that foreigners seek these scenes, that they delight in the wild and the picturesque, but they cannot see why. The mountain is to them the same region of penance and sorrow which it was to Dante. A cloudless sky; the breadth of a sea-girt horizon, the splendour of a summer sunset; the fragrance of their orange-groves; the sweet songs of the blackbird and the nightingale; the fertility of gardens; and, above all, the sun from morning

until night are all the love for Nature I could discover in the Sorrentini.

High wind has no music for them; clouds distress them if they come dark and heavy from the mountains, or barely draw an exclamation, if they are curiously shaped, like an animal, for instance; they see no sort of beauty in their delicate texture and wonderful shades of pale grey, melting down to sullen blue. Rain they suffer, because it fertilises the thirsty earth, but as a necessary evil; a storm is a calamity, an eruption from Vesuvius fills them with horror — that is natural enough, however — and it is with a shudder that Carmela tells me of the three fiery moaths, as she calls them, which opened last year in the flanks of the mountain.

So far as I have been able to observe, the repose, the calmness of Nature are the delight of the Italian, even as its agitation and wildness pain them as a sort of disorder. The beauty of this repose — and who has not felt the enchantment of cloudless skies — seems to me imaged very fairly in Italian literature.

I have but two Italian books by me, "Dante's *Commedia*" and Manzoni's works; but they are books which, read in the calmness of an Italian summer, make one feel "only in Italy, and by an Italian, could these pages have been written."

Apart from his sculptural distinctness, which shows that he lived in a land of light, Dante has a rapturous delight in sun and sky, which prove that, to him, they were the best part of landscape. In the first canto of purgatory, for instance, he sees the sun rising. It is the beautiful planet of love; all orient is in smiles; Virgil speaks with Cato at some length; and what is purgatory like? All we see of the landscape is a low shore lined with reeds, and the sun still rising, and a shivering of waters at the horizon.

Throughout the succeeding cantos, we find the same close attention to the motions of the sun, to his rays, slanting or broken, to the changes in his aspect according to the time of day, and scarcely, unless when it is strictly required by the subject, anything like a description of the place;

light so charms the poet that he sees nought else. The Book of Paradise is a blaze of light and splendour, on which he gazes, eagle-like, with rapture.

Italian distinctness, purity, and serenity, have had their manifestations in Dante, for, although his temper was not serene, he saw things distinctly.

In Manzoni we have another and a better man, a noble and lofty soul, though less consciousness of external beauty. We feel, as we read, that his temper does for him what genius did for Dante. His old age is said to be oppressed with melancholy, but surely divine peace was with him when he wrote.

Every reader of foreign literature is acquainted with "Monte Christo" or the "Wandering Jew;" but very few of that class of readers are they who read, or care to read, Manzoni's "Promessi Sposi." It is too calm, too serene; there is too little agitation or excitement about it, and, like many a noble book, it fails through its very qualities. The incidents of the story are dramatic enough,

for Manzoni wrote when the French Romantic school was strong, but there is a sweetness in "Lucia," a homeliness in "Renzo," a truth in "Dom Abondio," which disappoint imaginative minds. "Lucia" is too simple, "Renzo" is too calm, "Dom Abondio" is too pitilessly commonplace.

These people suffer, and they talk quietly, bear patiently, and are in short too natural and too true. The healthy mind of the writer saw them, and painted them as they were, not through poverty, but because it would not receive or give images unstamped with truth. In vain, with all this simplicity, he blended a loftiness, rare at any time, and very rare now, his own countrymen admired him, great geniuses and great critics of every land praised him, but popular beyond Italy he never has been; for fame is not popularity.

The same noble serenity abounds in his poems and tragedies. His lyrics are amongst the finest that ever were written; this is acknowledged, but his tragedies are taxed with coldness. Strange coldness! They are not, indeed, spasmodic efforts,

written in moments of excitement for a public whose taste has long been palled; they grew in the serenity of the Italian climate, and they were composed for a people with whom a book is an event, and in whose literary annals a noble tragedy marks an epoch, and — this brings me back to what I have ventured to say — only in Italy and by an Italian could the prose and poetry of Manzoni be written.

The qualities of this fine genius do not appear in the other modern productions of Italian literature; for, however they may partake of his race and country, they are personal qualities; but though they are wanting in works which Italy admires and ranks high, though we may miss the simplicity, the noble faith, we will not find in their stead more real passion, more love of wild landscape. The romantic scenery is told in few words, or with evident coldness; the passion sometimes rages high, but it is a false storm, you do not believe in it. The qualities of these works lie in another region, in old historical characters and traditions, in political feelings to which they appeal

openly. It is curious to note how, of all the peculiarities of the modern school of literature, the Italians only received what exactly suited themselves. They took most readily the pageantry of history, its lessons, its records, and they worked them out with more or less skill, but with zeal and goodwill; for these are of every land; the passion for wildness and bleak scenery they left to the north, whence it had sprung. Of the beauties of their own land they did not even care to speak; not through indifference, but because there was no need. What Italian requires to be told that Italy is lovely? He sees it, he feels it from his birth to his grave, and with a sort of happy carelessness he lets her be lovely. The more beautiful a man's mistress is, and the less will he talk of her beauty. He knows she is charming, everyone knows it, and if anyone doubts it, let him look at her face.

It is the stranger, the foreigner, who cannot be silent about Italy; who admires and raves, and, whilst he talks, the Italian hears him with a calm, provoking smile, that says plainly, you may praise her if you like it; I need not. She is mine, and for ever.

SIXTH CHAPTER.

Walks around Sorrento.

TIME wears on, October has set in, and Sorrento is beautiful as in the spring-time of the year. Nature here does not weary of her smiles as in the north. She is glorious and prodigal to the last. Here and there a withering walnut-tree appears in the orchards; a little yellow and shivering aspen drops its leaves above the old brown wall into the path; or one of the stout oaks that climb the mountain side shows a red bough, but that is all. The bluish foliage of the olive, the verdant leaves of the orange and the lemon-tree die of a separate, individual death; no fatal season bids them at one time all decay and die.

When I went out on our loggia this morning, the sun was up, but still hidden behind the high eastern mountains. The fresh morning breeze gave exquisite purity to sea and sky; rosy and golden tints appeared through the mists that half veiled

Ischia; a white edge, as of foam, softened the blue of the sea; the whole coast had a delicate grace of outlines, of hills melting on mountains, and mountains fading away on the morning paleness of the sky, that almost gave me a sense of sorrow, for it spoke of paradise, and this is but earth after all. The deep ridges of Vesuvius were lines of light on dark purple; the long cloud of smoke which the westerly winds sent down the graceful sweep, into which it has been moulded by floods of lava, was touched with the glow of the early sun. Swiftly he was ascending the blue sky, sending before him streams of radiance that passed like fire on the summits of dewy mountains. When he came, it was not with the ruddy aspect of his rising, but, clad in the yellow and gold of his full strength, he hung above the arid peak of Saint Angelo, then went up joyous as a bridegroom, exulting like a giant.

And the walks about Sorrento are as beautiful, as delightful, as ever. We went the other day to Caserlano, a solitary church in the mountains, for village I saw none. We passed by San Renato, formerly the cathedral of Sorrento, now a ruined

convent surrounded by orange-gardens. The church is gone, but the tower, with its blue dial that tells no more the hour, has remained; the ornamental frescoes are not quite effaced from the crumbling walls of the cloister; in the cells of the monks have nestled a whole flock of poor people. Clothes hang out to dry from the broad arches; one is a loggia, with flower-pots; another, black with smoke, has evidently long been a kitchen; the flat roof, too, where it is not broken, has been made useful. I caught sight of an iron pot peeping over the edge, and which had certainly not gone up there without a purpose. Gaps of ruin, with deep arches full of maidens' hair, and leading into cellars where cows lowed, broke on the poor dwellings. Trees from the opposite gardens shaded the narrow grass-grown path; a prickly aloes plant crowned the ancient fountain where a little girl was washing. Above the faint trickle of water that fell into the old stone basin was engraved a half-effaced inscription in the language which Italy has forgotten, and in the classical style of the sixteenth century. In stately speech it spoke of its cool waters, and in-

vited to taste of them a little bare-footed girl who was very busy just then in washing the linen of some baby brother.

But we were not bound for San Renato. We went on. The sun was hot, but the lane, with high walls and high trees on either side, was cool and shady. We passed by a pale, fair-haired German artist, painting. He had chosen for the subject of his picture the winding of the path, an old brown house on which the sun never shines, a half-open door, a glimpse of an orange-garden, with a sunbeam touching up the yellow fruit, the whole as gloomy and as sad as heart could wish for; the oranges alone spoke of the south. He had travelled hundreds of miles to paint that. A few steps farther on, the dark wall ceased, and a beautiful southern landscape, radiant with life and light, opened before us. A large orchard, with vines and orange-trees, grew below the road; the little belfry of San Renato rose above their verdure; the sea and the coast bounded the horizon westward; and before us rose the hill of Caserlano, with olive-groves and brown masserie, baked with the sun, and large-

leaved aloes growing from the very heart of the yellow rock. And we both said, why did not the German artist paint this; even farther on, if he likes more limited landscape, could he not have found the picturesque lavatorio? The most lovely verdure crowns its brown walls; tender ferns, shining ivy, pale clematis, grow ever there; the sun shines on it without; within, though it is open to the sky, there is a cool green light that speaks of perpetual freshness. Higher up, a steep narrow road winds on to the mountain; a large fig-tree half shades it, and in the shelter of the tree hides a little house, a poor home with broken steps, that ever sends up a pale blue smoke. And was not this a more pleasing and more beautiful landscape than the sad house between the two sad walls which the German artist had chosen? Again, we wondered what could make him choose it. Was it love of singularity, a morbid temper, or did he really prefer to the glorious glow of Italian scenery the dark and dismal aspects it so rarely offers? If so, what brought him here to take back with him libels on Italian beauty?

The road to Caserlano is steep and long; it passes through houses, then stretches up the mountain between grey rocks that seem to have been thrown there by some giant hand. Strong oaks, green caroub trees, break here and there on the monotony of the olive-plantations. The little church of Caserlano was closed — not a soul did we see. Facing it stands a little chapel, with its back to a green precipice, which we had come to draw. Winter rains had defaced the frescoes; half of the Madonna and more than half of a saint were gone; a young Dominican nun kneeling with the wreath of virgin roses round her brow, and the divine child looking down at her, alone remained. A few creeping herbs had kept green within the shelter of this little building, but the thistles that grew around it were burned with the sun.

Far away below us we saw sea and islands and all Sorrento embosomed within its orchards, with a foreground of rocks on which the sun shone, but we heard not a sound. Since the last rain the cicada is silent, the birds sing not now, and the

very wind on the mountain was still; silence and solitude guarded the little mountain shrine. We remained until sunset; rapidly the fiery globe sank into the cool azure sea; the islands at the far horizon, the clouds in the sky; the rocks, trees, and mountains, lit up with a burning glow between fire and gold, and partaking of both. At length he vanished; the splendour passed away; the red and rose tints turned into violet and purple, and faded into grey. A chill breeze rose; swiftly night came down the mountains — not with her sister twilight to close the gates of day, but as she ever comes here, alone, rapid and pitiless, invading every spot and covering all things with her dark mantle. Later, indeed, and when we had reached home, the full moon rose, bright, glorious, filling the heavens with light, and seeming to float a round globe on a back-ground of blue sky. Liquid stars, tremulous and glittering like diamonds, came with her, pale mists, pervaded with light, defined the edges of the mountains, and the most barren in the day looked at night the most lovely. But, alas! why go on describing? We have but a few words

with which to tell of the infinite beauty of the works of God, and when we have said of a thing, — "It is beautiful" — we can, let us do our best, say little more.

From every high spot around Sorrento you see the noble bay of Naples, but always with some variety of stunted tree, grey rock, mountain chapel, narrow bridge, or mountain outline, with some change of sunlight or sky where clouds pass on slow and majestic, or light and aerial, that make the scene a new thing to behold. All these walks are quiet, safe, and lonely. If you go to the little church of Saint Antonio, with its yews and its solitary monk of ninety-eight, the last of the brotherhood, you may see, as we did, a little bare-footed mountaineer running four times up and down the rocks with a jar of milk on her head, or a flock of Seminaristi, in blue gowns, black hats, and red stockings, going up to the mountain, to read there, in their sonorous Italian voices, some manuscript history of Sorrento.

More fortunate still will you be if you can meet at San Pietro, sotto il monte, the beautiful

woman I saw there. She came down the mountain path with the step and mien of a mountain nymph. Her dark hair was drawn back from her white brow; her brown eyes had the clear light of stars; her features were open and radiant with smiles and beauty; her complexion of pure red and white had never felt the burning sun; all her life she had lived in cool orange-gardens. She was richly dressed, too, in a violet silk jacket and shirt, with long gold earrings and numberless rows of chains passed around her white neck and falling down to her waist. But I thought more of her beauty. I looked at her, mute and breathless. Did she guess that I found her handsome? I cannot say; but her rosy lips parted in a smile that showed two rows of pearl, and, bending her head, she sweetly said, "*Buon giorno*," and passed on.

Oh! to be a painter, I thought, and fix that delightful face on canvas for ever. This beautiful creature left me a sense of joy that reminded me of a pretty little speech Fra Vincenzo, the Franciscan brother, once made to us.

"Signore," he said, "there was a time when, if

you went up to Santa Agata, or any of those places in the mountains, and met a young girl on your way, you saw her so lovely and so pure that you could not help saying: — 'Blessed be the hand of God that has created thee so beautiful.'" And with a sigh he deplored the decay of morals and the mischief done by the railroad from Naples to Castellamare, and continued the discourse of which this was but the passing illustration.

SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Pœstum.

THERE are three ways of going from Sorrento to Pœstum. The sailing traveller, who fears not sea-sickness, takes a boat, and coasts along the beautiful bays of Naples and Salerno, pausing on his way to visit La Cava and Amalfi. The traveller, who likes mountain-scenery, hires a donkey, and, with alternations of donkey, boat, and carriage, reaches Pœstum. The traveller who fears fatigue, takes a carriage at once, and rides the whole way.

To the last class we happened to belong, and accordingly we engaged a carriage for five days, last Tuesday, and drove away on a fresh and lovely October morning. The five days are over now, but the pleasure, the delight they gave, will last as long as memory. We seem to have passed through a dream of glorious and beautiful things, but more vividly beautiful than any dream will

ever be. We have seen Swiss-like La Cava, enchanting Amalfi, beautiful Salerno — we have seen old Pœstum in its desert, where, spite what the sceptical may say, the roses still bloom; and we have come back in time for the earthquake of yesterday morning, so that we have missed none of the curiosities of the country.

Who knows but we may have an eruption soon? Vesuvius looks quiet enough; but all the springs are dry, and the arid earth in vain waits for rain — in vain the trees weep for mercy, to use the local expression.

"If Vesuvius would send a little fire, it would certainly do good," quietly said Carmela to me yesterday morning.

They all speak of Vesuvius as if it were a smoky chimney. The earthquake, however, Carmela did not treat so coolly.

"Thanks to the Almighty and the intercession of the Madonna," she said, turning up her brown eyes, "she had heard and felt nothing! She would certainly have died with fear!"

When the earthquake was over, her brother

wakened her, and she joined the whole family in saying the litanies. All Sorrento, indeed, was sadly frightened. The streets and the piazza were thronged in a few seconds, and many people did not return to their houses until it was day.

For some days past, the atmosphere of Sorrento, usually so clear, had been clouded. A thick white mist, that covered sea and mountain on the evening of our return, compelled us to close the doors and windows as the sun set. We retired early, and, tired with our five days' journey, we slept soundly; but about two hours after midnight we both wakened with a tremulous motion of our beds. They shook and rattled under us, and shook us with them.

"It is an earthquake!" I said.

I rose. I unlocked our room-door, but where was the use? Flight down a dark stone staircase was absurd and dangerous — besides, I felt more surprise than fear. I turned back, and opened the window; it shook in my hand. The iron balcony on which I leaned, the walls of the house, shook, and the noise of rattling furniture in the drawing-

room was growing louder. The night was lovely — the mists had vanished, the sky was clear, the stars were brilliant, the air was still, the moon shone without a cloud. I was not afraid, not apprehending real danger; but had I felt terror, I think it would have been then — to feel the very foundations of the earth quivering, and to behold that immovable, that pitiless serenity of the sky.

There were two — some say, three — shocks. They lasted two minutes. I was surprised, when they were over, to feel a sensation like sea-sickness. The tremulous motion was much stronger than that of a steamboat on quiet water. No actual damage was done, but the bells in the churches by the sea all rang; and as yesterday was Sunday, every preacher, from the curato to the archbishop, slipped the earthquake into his sermon, and gave the good people of Sorrento a sound dose of pastoral admonition.

But to return to Poëstum. Early, in the cool of the morning, we drove along the fine road which is cut in the mountains above the sea, and

leads from Sorrento to Castellamare. We had a good open carriage, and three of those little Italian horses that beat all other horses for spirit and endurance. Carmela accompanied us as far as Castellamare, where she has relatives. It was her first journey there by land, and her eyes sparkled with pleasure. The scenery was beautiful; but the charm of mountains, of winding glens, of picturesque villages and white villas, all seen through light morning mists, is hard to put in words.

On the road, we met his Royal Highness Prince Leopold, a fat, good-humoured looking prince, who has a handsome villa in Sorrento. He was riding in a public carriage like our own, with two men, in cotton jackets, on the box. Outriders, equerries, lacqueys, postillions, were absent. There is no country like this for ease. This brother of a king, and descendant of the Bourbons, is fond of the mountains. He regularly goes off to them, and passes under our windows, riding on his donkey, and preceded, in Eastern style, by six fiddlers, all blind of one eye. On the present occasion, he leaned back, lazily smoking a cigar; and, as usual,

he neither received nor gave any token of recognition.

We crossed Castellamare where the miserable galley-slaves were at their task; in the market-place we dropped Carmela, who stepped into a carrozzella, and on we went, beyond houses, along the dusty road, no longer freshened by the pure breeze from the sea. On we went, by cotton plantations where women were picking the ripe balls; by fields of rich Indian corn; by tall, graceful plants, which our coachman called tea, but from which castor-oil is made; by lovely vineyards where the vine grew in graceful arches above; below, the most beautiful verdure covered the earth, and streaks of sunshine passed on it, yellow, like gold. By lanes fresh and shady we passed; by plantations, where the young trees lay felled, and men were sawing wood; by rope-makers at their task; by cotton, shining like white silk in baskets at the doors of houses; by men and women drying corn on the flat roofs; by old castles and white convents perched on the mountains, and brown farm houses at their feet; by villages, called

towns, and where the dirty houses were nobly built; on we went without stopping, and getting strange glimpses of things. Two things struck me, because we saw them everywhere — the barber's shop decorated like a church, and with a sort of altar standing in the centre, a pair of brass basins and a dingy-looking glass, ornamented with tinsel, serving to adorn it; the quantity of pumpkins heaped on the loggia, and the green and yellow melons hanging against the walls. Over the door of one house, a stout melon was firmly pinned between the two prickly leaves of a strong aloe, and in that state of torture it awaited its ultimate fate. The Italians delight in those sorts of contrivances.

We passed through La Cava without stopping, on to Salerno. Are there many views like that of the Bay of Salerno, as it opens before the traveller who comes from La Cava or Amalfi?

Mountains fading on mountains rise on the sky; the blue sea stretches away in the misty distance, and sweeps with the most beautiful curve into the

noble bay. A rose-coloured line by the shore marks the winding road that leads to the desert of Poëstum. The white city, with the dome of its cathedral rising high, lies in a semi-circle of the hills; on a foremost peak stands an ancient castle, which looked of vermillion and gold in the light of the sun; the prickly pear, opuntia, grew in distorted masses above the rocks of the road; aloes flourished in the broken arch of a little ruined fountain by which we passed; everything showed a nature more southern, more luxuriant, than that which we had left.

We spent the afternoon in visiting the town. It was one of the great and flourishing cities of the middle ages, and it was famous especially for its medical science. It is still a thriving and populous town after all the vicissitudes that made it pass under the yoke of the Romans, the Lombards, and the Normans; but its ancient renown has long been gone. It is known in the kingdom of Naples for its cattle-fair, which takes place in September, on the day of Saint Mathieu. Carmela's aunt cannot understand why we did not choose

that opportune moment for our visit. We excused ourselves on the score of the heat.

I do not think there is much to be seen in Salerno; we were satisfied with a visit to the cathedral, and an ascent up one of the heights which command the city, and whence we had a magnificent view. It was not merely Salerno that lay below us; it was the bay, with Amalfi to the right, and Pœstum to the left; infinite breadth and infinite beauty. The cathedral was closed when we passed by it; we found it open when we came down, but still almost deserted; we entered a court rich with the spoils of Pœstum; it was a sort of museum brought here by plunder. Roger Guiscard, the Norman master of Salerno, is said to have done more towards the destruction of Pœstum than the infidels and barbarians by whom it was ravaged.

Costly carved sarcophagi have lost their Pagan tenants, and received Christian dust. Columns of verde antique, taken from the Heathen temples, now support and adorn the Christian cathedral. It has lost its Gothic character, but is very imposing in effect. Gregory VII., delivered by

Guiscard from the vengeance of Henry IV., lived and died in Salerno, and was buried in the cathedral. His marble statue has an austere look, and still seems to defy the wrath of mortal kings. Near him was buried Cardinal Caraffa, who, according to his epitaph, asked, during his lifetime to repose, after his death, in the place "where Gregory VII., Sovereign Pontiff, watchful guardian of ecclesiastical liberty, still protects it, though lying in the grave."

Below the cathedral, there is a fine subterranean church, in which the body of Saint Mathieu has reposed since 1080.

If we had found Salerno beautiful in the day, we found it even more beautiful at night; we sat on the broad balcony of the hotel, and seemed to have entered another hemisphere. The sun, which set in Sorrento to our left, here sank below the mountains to our right, lighting up the opposite coast with the most vivid glow. When it had vanished, the mountains became of an intense blue, one line of a paler hue defined on another in a shade more deep. Far away stretched the beautiful

coast of Amalfi; the green mountains sloped down to the sea, and between them opened graceful little bays, where the sea slept calm and still. It was lovely, but it was not all; presently the moon arose; she filled the sky with light, and hung above the tremulous waves, alone and glorious in her place above. The moonlit quay below presented the most animated aspect. Priests, monks, ladies, picturesque peasant women, venders of fruit and lemonade, musicians, were ever passing to and fro, talking, laughing, singing; carriages drove up and down the white flags, and handsome carriages too they were; the lines of the shipping in the fort alone were still; everything else was noise, motion, and life.

The stars were still shining in the sky, when we rose to be off to Pæstum. A pretty specimen of Italian impudence awaited us. The owner of the carriage we had hired sat by the coachman on the box. He had asked to come in order to see that his horses would have enough to eat; the drivers are notorious for half-starving them, and we had willingly consented. But now his vetturino

came up with a request. His master's brother-in-law wished to go to Pæstum; would we allow him to sit on the box? the Padrone himself, with a devotedness very unusual in brothers-in-law, would ride behind the carriage. The brother-in-law was an evident invention. To consent, moreover, was simply to have him, whoever or whatever he might be, in the carriage with us. The Padrone was a fat, red man; a ride of sixty miles behind a carriage, in a broiling sun, through an unhealthy country, might half kill him. We could not do that for the sake of decorum or etiquette. We therefore refused at once.

Promptly appeared the Padrone, all amazement. "What, not allow his brother-in-law a seat on the box?"

"No, it could not be thought of."

"But, signora, he is not merely my brother-in-law; he is a guide. We cannot proceed on our journey without him. I have never been to Pæstum; my man has never been to Pæstum."

But we recklessly declined the guide, and begged to hear no more about him.

"But, signora," desperately said the Padrone, "he is a priest, and what is more, he does not come back, he stays at Poestum."

This, the most flagrant invention of all — Poestum is so notoriously unhealthy that a night there brings on the fever — having also failed, the Padrone feelingly said he had not thought we would make him lose two piastres, and pathetically asked why we would not do this for *his* sake? Thus confessing, with great candour, that he had let a second time the carriage which we had taken on the understanding that, as we paid for the whole of it, it was to be ours entirely. Of course the two piastres left us unmoved; we declined the priest, as we had declined the brother-in-law and the guide, and went down, thinking the matter settled.

But the priest, who proved to be a real priest, and not a visionary being, was below, discussing angrily with the vetturino. What was the meaning of this! He had been offered this conveyance to Poestum. He had agreed to pay seventeen earlini for it, even the two piastres were an untruth, he had been called up at five o'clock, and now he was

not to go. He spoke fast and in perfect Italian, but there was nevertheless something in his tone, something too in the fiery sparkle of his blue eye, that reminded me of another speech and another race than the Italian. I could not help asking him if he was not a foreigner.

"Sono Irlandese," he replied.

He was an Irishman. We were already hesitating; this settled the matter. We felt but too well pleased to be able to oblige so easily our countryman in this strange land. Dr. Mac E—, entered the carriage, and the Padrone resumed his seat on the box, chuckling at his seventeen carlini so cheaply bought at the cost of a little disgrace.

Our Padrone had provided us with a very pleasant fellow-traveller. Dr. Mac E— was the friend of some of our esteemed friends in Rome, a perfect gentleman, an intellectual man, too, without a particle of pedantry, which was a great blessing in a learned man. He was also what Irishmen, clerical or not, are apt to be, delightful company. He was then on an excursional tour in the Kingdom of

Naples, and he enjoyed himself with the vivacity and the freshness of a school-boy.

Delightful indeed was the whole of that journey. The morning was fresh and dewy, the road was good, the three little black horses went at a gallant rate, and seemed not to think of returning that night to Salerno. Human habitations we soon left behind; glorious mountains skirted a broad desert plain, that reminded us all of the Roman Campagna; over it hovered the hawk, ready to swoop down on the small birds that fled away screaming. The road was solitary; now and then we met a carrozzella, drawn by two thin horses, and bearing an incredible load of men, women, children, and pumpkins; or we came on a herd of wild-looking buffaloes, with a brown, haggard-looking herdsman leaning picturesquely on his staff; I still remember one of those few apparitions. She was an Egyptian-looking girl, with a white cloth falling around her grave, dark face; she sat by the road with her hands folded on her lap, she looked at us as we passed, with serious eyes and immoveable countenance, like a sphinx on a monument.

The morning was growing hot; we had crossed the Sele in the ferry; we had passed hedges where the Poestum-rose was in full bloom, when I saw a row of tall columns rising on the sky. It was the temple of Ceres, the first of the three great buildings that greet the traveller's eye; the signal that marks the goal of his pilgrimage.

We passed a large white house and garden, both looking well, and the carriage deposited us all at the door of a wretched-looking place, that called itself a hotel. The name must have been given it by some ironical traveller; vanity would never go so far. We saw nothing but a room black with smoke, without windows or furniture, a dirty table before which two men sat playing at cards, and a battered chair by the open door. An English stable looks better.

But little we cared for this; we alighted, and proceeded, all eagerness and impatience, to the ruins. We found a hot road, burnt hedges, and an iron gate, behind which appeared two sallow, sickly faces.

"Four carlini to get in, and six to draw," said one.

Mammon had travelled as far as Pœstum. We argued, but four carlini was still their song.

"We pay when we come out," impatiently said Dr. Mac E—, and at length the gate opened.

We entered a wide plain, bounded by the blue line of the sea. Before us rose two stately buildings, one of the deepest tawny yellow on which a southern sun ever shone, the other of lighter columns and paler colour, but both looking as if none save giant hands could have raised them. This was Pœstum. We looked, but did not speak.

This desert field, where weeds grew rank, and poisoned the surrounding air with their sweet, though penetrating odour, was the side of a great and populous city; the city of the luxurious Sybarites, of the people who have left their name to man's indulgence of the senses. In the two noble buildings that stood before us, commanding our silence and our admiration, vanished races, whose very names are a matter of dispute, had met and

worshipped. That blue sea, which stretched a mile away behind the yellow columns of the grand temple of Neptune, had brought commerce, wealth, and civilization to a powerful people.

On that desert shore the Saracen invader had landed a thousand years before, and left behind him the wilderness which we saw. But what are a thousand years in the history of Pœstum? To look at its three temples is to go beyond the ages of which man has preserved the reckonings; to deride history and her vain memorials. Who built Pœstum? Was it really a Phœnician colony? Did it welcome Ulysses? Did Jason and the Argonauts sacrifice in the temple of Neptune? Did Hercules, son of Jove, and mightiest of men, visit the vanished temple of Diana? There is no knowing; the fabulous seems here as likely as the true, or rather there is here neither fable nor story, nothing save three great buildings standing in a wide desert which they seem to guard; the sea on one hand, mountains on the other; the blue sky and burning sun over all. And to see them as they are, grand, lonely, inexplicable, mighty wrecks left stranded on

the shores of time, travellers come hundreds of miles nor think their labour lost.

We entered the temple of Neptune; on three high steps rest its Doric columns, six for the breadth, fourteen for the length. The roof they once supported is gone, but the two frontispieces remain. Within, the guide showed us where the cella had stood, the place for the sacrifices, the trace of a staircase; then he sat down and left us quiet.

Parallel with the temple of Neptune stood the Basilica, another noble building, and between them spread a field, yellow and purple with flowers, and sparkling with dew; here and there a few grey stones raised their heads above the surface of the soil. To our left rose the colonnade of the temple of Ceres. These were the three buildings we had come to see.

But if there are few objects to see at Paestum, those few are great, and remain impressed on the mind for ever. The stern simplicity of the Doric buildings, the absence of architectural details and ornaments, the severity of their outlines, the vast-

ness of their size, the vividness of their colour, the very desert in which they stand, all seem to dare the beholder to forget them.

I wished to bring home sketches at least of the Temple of Neptune and of the Basilica. But the two sallow youths, having ascertained that I had no permission to draw, resisted entreaties and half offers of reward. They looked incorruptible. I felt incredulous, however, and beckoning to the Padrone of the carriage, I told him to manage this for me. He smiled knowingly, went aside with his two worthy countrymen, and came back in a few minutes with the intelligence that two carlini, 8d. sterling, would give me any permission I might wish for. The two boys heard him, and remained shamelessly grave. It was a matter of course. I went and sat on an old stone, a venerable relic, which had but one unpleasantness; it was in the sun, and the sun was scorching. My two sallow friends sat near me, to prevent me from being seen, they said; though who was to see me in this desert? Their dog, a long hairy creature, black and tan, who is accustomed to be fed by travellers, and answers to

the English name of Fox, lay on the grass by them.

We were facing the Temple of Neptune and the Basilica. It was a dreary, majestic picture. Not an object, not a tree or mound of earth broke on the solemn masses of the two buildings. Between them stretched a broad field, where weeds waved like young shrubs; far away it spread; fading away into yellow, until it seemed to wash the base of distant and purple hills, over which hung mists of heat.

"If the governor says anything to you," said one of the two lads to the other, "and asks what traveller it was who was drawing, answer 'No one was drawing.'"

An emphatic nod was the reply to this speech, which disturbed me. It was plain I had led the two innocent youths into a serious dereliction of duty, and for what? for two very indifferent sketches! My conscience has been made easy since our return. Vincenzo, the cicerone, on hearing me talk of a permission to draw in Paestum, has rolled his eyes and gone into one of his usual furie. "A

permission! who ever heard of such thing? but it was of a piece with the grating which has been put to the field. Was it supposed that any one was going to carry away one of the temples? No! it was only a way to get money from travellers, and the permission for drawing was of a piece."

From which I have been compelled to conclude that the two youths of Paestum were two profound diplomatists and amateur actors who liked to carry out a fiction in these nice minute details that give acting its grace.

Spite the burning sun, we lingered two hours amongst those fine ruins; we could not bear to leave them. One never passes Paestum; you must come there expressly, and we all three felt there was little chance of our seeing this place again. With a feeling akin to sorrow; and with many a look at the yellow front of Neptune, we at length turned away.

A miry road, that passed through fields gray with stones, and by a hedge wall built out of the ruins of the city, led us to the only gate that has remained standing. It is very perfect; a road

still passes underneath it on to the purple mountains that rise above it. Above the arch, the sculptured siren, emblem of Poestum, can be distinctly seen. On either side stretch the ruins of those massive walls which almost equalled the famous walls of Carthage in size and strength; they are covered with verdure; beautiful cyclamens, yellow thistles grow around them.

Our last visit was to a lonely field filled with bushes. Every one of those bushes marks the spot of an ancient tomb; only one has been excavated. Government will not allow the others to be opened, nor yet open them itself, and thus they remain provokingly closed. We had seen all; hours had passed away, it was time to go, and away we went without being able to get a drink of water at the hotel! our own supply was exhausted. We reached Salerno with the fall of day, and awoke in the night to talk of the Temple of Neptune.

We left the next morning for Amalfi, and Doctor Mac E— accompanied us. The scenery from Salerno to Amalfi is all that one can well

imagine of grand and beautiful. The breadth of the sea to the left, the romantic windings of the coast, still guarded by ancient forts, the wildness of the mountains to the right, the luxuriant vegetation, the picturesque grace of the villages, above all, the enchanting colouring, spread over mountain, coast, and sea, are almost too beautiful. We all uttered an exclamation of delight as a turning of the road showed us Amalfi. The sea glittered with light, the lines of the mountains were soft and aerial with rosy mists, and on a background of blue air a bold and graceful mountain sloped down to the sea. On the profile of that mountain shone a fair white city, crowned with a castle: that was Amalfi. Amalfi, once the rival of Venice; Amalfi, where the lost Roman law was found; Amalfi, where the Moors reared those luxurious homes of which the ruins still seem to the stranger a demiparadise.

But, alas! it is a Paradise to none save the stranger. The land is rocky and barren; commerce has forsaken those seas, the people are miserably poor. Along the whole road we were

shocked to behold women, girls, and often mere children, bending under loads that would be heavy for the full strength of man; sunburnt, short and ill-formed, clothed in the most miserable rags, without either the delicacy or the grace of their sex, they seemed to me the saddest objects I had ever seen. We were struck with the Saracen cast of their faces, so different from the Greek heads that we see in Sorrento. The whole coast indeed is Moorish. The white houses and small windows, the low enclosed gardens, the roofs rising above the walls like flattened domes, reminded us of all that description and painting had told us of eastern life and scenery.

Doctor Mac E— was extremely anxious to see the little village of Atrani, which lies just without Amalfi. It was, he said, a sort of Algiers or Tunis en petit; it had besides a church where the Doges of Amalfi were elected, and that boasted of certain bronze gates and a bell with a Gothic inscription. We alighted; two cicerones promptly appeared; both ragged urchins, with the Turkish

cap, but one, on hearing us speak English, was so alarmed at the barbarous sounds that he fled, with terror in his looks, and could not be lured back. The other, more courageous, remained and took us to the church of San Salvatore. We went down steps, we entered gloomy passages, we went up staircases that proved to be streets, we crossed a market-place that looked both dirty and tumultuous, and where two men were wildly screaming at one another some saint's legend, one taking up the song as the other dropped it, and through more passages, and up more staircases, with a troop of boys and men at our heels, we reached a mouldy church-door, firmly shut.

"But we want to get in," said Doctor Mac E—.

Every man and boy present madly rushed off for the keys. In a second, a wild-looking young man, black-bearded, and in a costume more Indian than Moorish — he wore a pair of linen trowsers, reaching to the knee, and nothing else, not even a Turkish cap — breathlessly pushed through the crowd and opened the church-door. This strange beadle had been called from his task of making

maccaroni, and he thrust himself between us, and moved about with a self-possession that showed him wholly unconscious of any impropriety in his personal appearance. His only anxiety seemed to be to shut every door as fast as he opened it, and prevent his fellow townsmen from getting in after us. "Chiude, chiude," he once cried wildly to his companion. There was a slam, a vain rush, then clinging hands and half savage faces made their appearance at the iron grating behind us. We were convulsed with laughter, and could scarcely look at the church, the bronze gates, or the Gothic bell. Anything so unlike civilization we none of us had ever witnessed. In a few minutes more we reached Amalfi, and within half an hour, donkeys, donkey-boys and a guide were waiting for us at the door of the Capucini.

Amalfi is celebrated for the picturesque beauty of its views, and justly so. If you climb up to the Convent of the Capucini, perched up in the rock opposite the city, you will see a large natural grotto, in which figures of wood, life size, re-

present the whole history of the Passion; and below you spreads the blue sea, and rises sunlit Amalfi on the slope of the mountain, with its old castello and a green solitary pine. But if to such views, though fine, you prefer wild and lonely valleys, or high mountain-peaks, then truly Amalfi is the place for you. Amalfi is one of the strangest looking little towns in all Italy. You can never be said to go through the city, you either climb or descend; medium there is none. Our donkeys crossed a piazza, with the cathedral perched up an endless flight of steps; they took us under a dark passage, with a Moorish arch; a faint lamp burned before the image of the Madonna in its niche, and lovely rose-coloured flowers in broken vases were placed around it; the place was dark and damp; and invisible waters made a rushing sound. Up more staircases, that were streets of course, by windows, through which we saw women sitting in dismal rooms and men making macaroni, and under more arches, up more staircases, we reached the valley of the Molini.

Amalfi manufactures paper; of its quality I cannot speak, but lovely is the valley of the paper mills. Steep mountains, Swiss in height, Italian in their grace, rise on mountains more steep. In the cool glen below reigns the verdure of Eden. The white water leaps down grey rocks, and foams around old brown stones, over which bend young aspen trees, just tipped with golden sunlight, or shivering in the shade. Narrower and more rugged grows the path as you ascend, wilder and more romantic becomes the valley; the sun was setting as we reached its close. A golden glow shone on the farthest mountains, grey shade wrapped the foremost from their airy summit to their sombre base. Below us rolled the mountain stream in its rocky bed, and before us rose an ivy-clad ruin, grey and lone. No classical temple was this, no abbey of the middle ages, no castle of the fierce feudal times, nothing but a ruined foundry, but a house reared for the toil of man in the bosom of nature, a memorial of civilization and her arts, of man's strength, and of his power, still left standing in the wilderness. The full moon

rose over our path as we rode home, and we found her shining over the sea and beach at Amalfi beautiful and glorious as at Salerno.

We rose with dawn the next day to go to Ravello; we passed through Atrani, we rode up another wild and beautiful valley; coming down the steep path, we met women carrying such burdens as I could not have imagined that women could carry, — logs of wood, some of them entire trees, merely stripped of their bark, fastened together. They bent beneath the weight; it was a painful and pitiable sight. A group of these poor creatures sat down to rest on the rocks that hedged the narrow path. One of them was young and beautiful; in her seemed to have blended the blood of the Greek and the Moor. She was a fair-haired girl, with dark blue eyes, a delicate arched nose, and lips bright as coral. A coarse sack — to enable her to carry her burden — was folded on her head and fell to her shoulders around her fair young face; around her neck she wore a childish necklace of blue beads; her ragged skirt of coarse red cloth scarcely reached to her

knees, and left her slender limbs bare; linen rags were wrapped and fastened with twine around her feet, to protect them against the sharp stones of the path; in her hand she held the long staff with which these women balance the immense weights they carry; she was beautiful enough for a Madonna, but her beauty saddened my very heart.

At length we reached Ravello; a little piazza with a white church, a circular and ancient fountain, a row of trees, and magnificent views of distant sea, of deep valleys, shadowy or sunlit, of lofty mountains with castles Moorish or feudal. There we wanted to stay; but *bon gré mal gré*, Luigi Milone, our guide, led us away to the world of enchantment.

We all have read fairy tales, we all have dwelt in the palace, and wandered through the garden with the lovely Princess enchanted on the mountains, and we all have been happy in the delusion.

But it is a pleasure that goes as years and wisdom come. Then the fairy tale grows stale,

the mountain palace, the garden of delights fade and melt away, vain visions that can charm fancy no more.

Reader, when that sad time of scepticism has come for you, go to Amalfi, and climb the mountain of Ravello. No other dragons guard the path than the lions of the fountains on the piazza, and they are peaceable lions. The lovely Princess you will not find; she has fled with the Prince, or she is not yet born. The splendour of the palaces has grown somewhat dim, the gardens have run wild, but the air of enchantment still pervades the place, it is still fairy-land.

Our guide paused before a green door that seemed to open of itself; we passed under a porch supported by ancient columns, bounded by a cool and Moorish court. We ascended a broad flight of steps; we crossed empty rooms, vast and high, with gilded panels and painted ceilings, and fragments of antiquities; one, the marble bust of a Roman lady, whose coiffure belonged to the Imperial era, leaned against the wall with a melancholy look. At length we reached a terrace that

overlooked the sea, dazzling with the light of the morning sun. Mountain sloped down and dented the distant shores with numerous bays; through sparkling mists glittered white villages in the valleys, and above, in the purity of the air, rose mountains, with old castles and sunny vineyards. We looked with rapture, and at last turned away, dazzled with so much light and beauty. We crossed more rooms, lofty and deserted; in one we found two chairs, a table, a basket of fresh figs, a glass of water cool as snow, and a tabby cat mewing pitifully for a piece of the bread we had brought with us. We fed her until she was silent. The figs were fit for a queen, the water would make one abjure wine for ever. Presently a rosy, blue-eyed girl appeared; with a silent smile she signed us to follow her. She led us into a garden that had once been cultivated with care, and that was still beautiful in its decay. On either side of the long walk white pillars rose on the low wall that hemmed it in, and between them grew vines in those luxurious festoons that make the vine so graceful when it is half wild and unpruned.

The walk ended in another terrace, where another view, more dazzling, more beautiful than the first, appeared before us. But the charm of the spot was not in its views, though beautiful; it was in finding that once luxurious home, that once blooming garden, reared on the brow of a steep mountain, overlooking romantic valleys and a distant sea. I asked the name of the place.

"Casa Afriti," sweetly replied our guide.

The wonder ceased. An Afrite, a geni, had in one night raised this lovely home in this lovely solitude for the Princess whom he carried off on her wedding day. Happy Princess, to exchange earth for paradise!

I suppose the Princess was a Christian, and that it was for her convenience the complaisant Afrite built the pretty little church that faces the green door. We entered it: a white, silent spot it was, with exquisite marble columns, some as white and as pure as on the day they left the workman's hand. I now wanted to go back to the Piazza of Ravello and draw. Luigi Milone clasped his hands and looked pitiful.

"Signora, do not do me that wrong. There is another church, a very little way off."

We tried to resist, in vain; he begged so hard that we yielded. In the other church we found noble bronze gates, and beautiful columns, and mosaics from Pœstum. Poor Pœstum! every church on these shores, from the cathedral of Salerno to the little mountain chapel, is enriched with its spoils.

"This is very fine, Luigi," I said, "very fine, and now let us go back to Ravello."

"Signora, the Englishman's house is hard by, a Moorish castle; you would not leave without seeing the Moorish castle."

The Moorish castle had a magic sound; we went. We passed by a ruined tower, through a green and narrow garden; we caught sight of arches and colonnades, we wanted to stop and look, but Luigi would not let us have one glimpse; on he led us to a breach in an ancient wall; then he paused and so did we, delighted. An elegant little Moorish court, with slender pillars, and a gallery resting on broad arches, sank down to the

cool gloom of a square garden or flower-plot far below. Shadowy and secluded was the spot. We sat on the grassy bank and looked; for a moment we were not in Italy, where the sunlit loggia ever seems to seek the glow of day, we were transported to a more burning clime, to the mystery and the silence of an eastern home. When we had looked as long as we wished, and walked through the small but elegant garden, and admired the fine view, I thought to go back to Ravello. Again Luigi clasped his hands and looked piteous.

"Signora, when you go back to your country, and your friends find that you have not seen Casa Amici, what will they say of your guide?"

The appeal was irresistible. Luigi is one of a tribe of guides; wherever we went, we met either his father or one of his brothers, and their number seemed legion, on our way; and his whole pride seemed to be to show us all he could, from the best point of view. To Casa Amici we now went on his word, and let every one go who visits Amalfi. At the end of a long walk he will find

a noble terrace, adorned with the marble busts of ancient men and women, and overlooking the two beautiful bays of Salerno and Amalfi. And now having seen and admired, we were allowed to go back to Ravello, and thence down again to Amalfi.

A sallow, slim young man, with a face more Moorish than Italian, led down my donkey.

"Signora," he said, choosing a moment when we were alone, "you will not forget what you promised me yesterday?"

"What was that?"

"To give me the buona mano, drink-money."

"Certainly not."

"But, Signora, you will give it to me yourself?"

"Very well."

"Signora, you will give it to me, not to my padrone. You will give it to me," and he expressively fixed his eyes on mine, "with your own hands into mine, will you not?"

I promised to do so.

It is sad and amusing to notice how utterly the

lower Italians mistrust one another, and with how much reason. One of our two guides at Poestum took Doctor Mac E— apart to say to him, "Signore, pay me when my companion is not there, otherwise 'I shall have to divide with him."

From our room window at the Hotel de Capucini, we witnessed a thoroughly Italian scene. Noonday was burning the yellow beach. Heedless of the broiling sun that made the boats and small craft glisten again, a naked little boy stood on the very edge of the water, which washed his brown feet. He looked hot and happy, and kept his hands clasped above his head. In the foreground a group of fishermen were quarrelling with the most passionate vehemence. A sack of Indian corn was the subject of dispute. With great trouble two men placed it on the back of a third, he submitted quietly, but scarcely was it fairly on his shoulders, when he threw it down on the sand, leaped upon it, trampled it under his feet, and poured forth a perfect storm of furious speech. The screams of his companions, their dramatic

gestures, dark faces and black limbs, were more African than Italian. At length they calmed. Again the sack of corn was hoisted, and again, after another pause for reflection, it was indignantly cast down and trampled upon. Three times it underwent the same fate, before the dispute could cease. I had never seen such fury; but no one minded them, no one looked on. The little naked boy splashed his feet in the sea-water, and gave it a lazy kick, but he never turned round, he never moved from his place in the sun; the whole time the quarrel lasted he never took his clasped hands from his head, or deigned to give the quarrellers a particle of his attention. He was in his way a thorough little Diogenes.

Let none who wish to see and like la Cava do as we did, and see it after the grandeur of Pœstum, or the loveliness of Amalfi. And yet, if one could but forget the yellow temple of Neptune, and the gardens between sea and air on the summit of the Ravello, how cool and lovely La Cava would be. The town is very well built, very industrious and flourishing; porticoes line its streets, and the barren

soil of the hills, amidst which it lies, has been so carefully cultivated that the whole place is verdant as a garden; but it is northern verdure; the green of the orange and lemon is not found here save in sunny spots; tall trees, grown for the value of their timber, climb the mountain sides and make this place a sort of Italian Switzerland, less cold and more graceful than the real Switzerland, cooler and more picturesque, but far less beautiful, than the real Italy.

Cotton grown and manufactured on the spot is one of the chief products of La Cava, and we were scarcely in the place when our ears were assailed with the complaints and the murmurs that seem inherent to manufacturing districts.

"Formerly," said our informant, "our women paid dear for a canne of stuff, but they were well paid for making it, and now they buy cheap and cannot earn bread to eat. It is all the machines, ladies, it is all the fault of machinery!" Everywhere the same cry against man's knowledge; everywhere what should be a blessing considered as a curse.

We arrived in the evening; early the next morning we hired donkeys to go and visit the famous monastery Della Trinita, the grotto of Bonnet, and the Hermitage.

Casa della Trinita, built on the summit of a steep hill, for it did not seem a mountain, is one of those citadels of learning so common in the warlike times of the middle ages, which the Benedictine monks reared wherever quiet souls longed to retire from the rude noisy brawl of the world to the calmer world of books, to pore over, transcribe, or illumine with slow patience and monastic skill. The idea of penance which was attached to mountains, and the solitude and silence they promised, made religious orders choose the remote and often dreary spots in which we still find their homes. The way up to Casa della Trinita is lovely; everywhere we saw wild paths, picturesque views, hedges wet with dew, masses of mountain verdure through which peeped an old house, an ivy-covered wall, or a glimpse of far mountains and wooded hills, until the widening road brought us above a rushing stream, with trees rising up beyond it on

the mountain-side, to the front of Casa della Trinita. There is nothing beautiful or romantic in its plain aspect; but a picturesque rock hangs over it, and will certainly crush it one of these days. We could only catch an imperfect glimpse of the church; it was undergoing great repairs, and mass was being said in the portion that was free. Still less could we see the library, which, like the interior of the convent, is strictly forbidden to women; we could only sit in the vestibule, which had a lordly look, and wait there for Dr. Mac E—, who, since the preceding day, had been plunging in this sea of knowledge, against which the waves of the world have so long beaten in vain. Charters, deeds, codes of laws are the chief treasures of La Trinita. During the disturbances of the middle ages, nobles and private individuals deposited their most valuable family parchments and documents in this strong-hold, which the cupidity of the adventurer, or the tyranny of the prince, would never dare to violate. This is said to be the chief source of the literary, or rather, learned riches, which have made this monastery so famous. A code of

Lombard laws, which escaped Muratori, lies here snugly sleeping for I know not how many ages. What a voluptuous retreat for an antiquary! The civil lay-brother, who had shown us in, was probably not learned enough to value properly this magnificent collection, which amounts to seventy-five thousand MSS., all belonging to the middle-ages. He spoke of it with respect, indeed, but he spoke of the damp, too, and of rheumatism, and pains, and aches; he was old, and looked chilly and ailing.

Through the open windows we saw a wild, but not cheerful prospect; below the monastery rushed the stream, feeding mills on its way; trees covered the mountains which rose high and steep, and seemed to exclude every ray of sun from the convent; the place had a chill, and rather dreary look. We exchanged a few words with Dr. Mac E—, who was staying in the convent, and went on to the grotto of Bonnet. Why it has this French name, I do not know. Our way lay through a wild valley where our donkeys could not carry us. The chillness of the morning, of many trees, of

narrow paths, of water shivering through rocks and bushes, beset us everywhere. It was beautiful, but of a cold wild, sunless beauty. We went through the gloom of heavy verdure, and with the feeling of being enclosed by steep mountains; dew was thick and white like rain on the high grass; spite the late season, a blue violet peeped now and then from its nest of leaves; mossy and hoary trunks met us everywhere; everywhere we saw water gurgling through rocks; everywhere we walked under the shade of melancholy boughs; we saw glimpses of great beauty, but nothing like a picture until we reached the grotto of Bonnet.

It is the haunt of painters, and one, an Italian, already sat at his task. An immense rock, arched and hollowed, rises in a defile of the valley which it seems to close. The gloom of trees guards it to the left, to the right a water-mill, with a little mountainous background, has made good its place, and seems to brave its gigantic neighbour. A rude stream, spanned by a bridge, flows between them. It is a fine, dramatic picture, but it wants actors. The solitude of that wild arch, with its tapering

stalactites, seemed a mistake. There are certain dreary solitudes from which imagination would banish man, if she could; when we crossed the barren desert of the Grimsel, it seemed to me as if aught that breathes ought never to inhabit that painfully wild spot; but this strange grotto, so like a picture in a book or in a play, seemed incomplete without its human beings. Banditti have grown too common even on the stage; but a troop of Zingari, lighting their fire and cooking, would have done excellently here.

It is tiresome when nature suggests such thoughts, or rather when the abuse man has made of her beauty gives her, whether you like it or not, a stage look. I experienced the same unpleasant sensation when we came to the hermitage. It was built much higher up against the mountain; its position was picturesque and pleasant; the rosy morning sun shone upon it; the hermit was out, but it looked a gay little dwelling. This, too, is a favourite picture with painters; it is indeed charming, but do what I would, I found that it looked like a hermitage in an opera; I missed the simple

greatness, the grace free from prettiness, which are the characteristics of Italian landscape. I would rather, if I were a painter, make a picture out of the tangled masses of trees and the glimpses of waters, through which we had passed, in the valley, than sit down before this hermitage or the grotto of Bonnet. For Nature, in her mysterious haunts of water and verdure, has ever been, and ever will be, respected; a solitary pool with its reeds, a skirt of the forest, cannot be profaned and made vulgar, like a curiously shaped rock, or a prettily placed house and chapel; their delicate grace escapes the power of the decorator, and to be something requires the very masterdom of art.

Yet, if I may trust our guide, English and German artists haunt La Cava and its mountains; he spoke of numerous sites, all suited to painting, and which he was in the habit of showing to artistic tourists, but as we professed ourselves satisfied with what we had seen, and as he was in a great hurry to get back and procure other customers, this being a great day for pigeon shooting with the gentlemen of La Cava, he did not insist,

like Luigi Milone, but left us the exercise of our own free will. We drove back to Sorrento at once and reached it in time, not merely for the earthquake, but also to enjoy a few more sunny days. Now the long prayed for rain has come at last; mists roll down the blue mountains, the sun rises or sets in a stormy sky, the rain falls with a pleasant sound on the orange-trees; the birds, so long silent, sing sweetly through it all, and think that this is the coming of a second spring.

EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Capri.

Two years ago we went to Capri. We went in Giuseppe Mici's boat, early in the morning, with a grey sea washing the sandy beach. The sun rose, the sky cleared, but the sea remained still as glass. Scirocco was blowing, and let those who have felt Scirocco on land imagine what it is on sea, in a four-oared boat. Scirocco is the south wind, and the bane of labour, exertion, cheerfulness, and all happy feeling. Scirocco makes the bilious wretched, and the nervous prostrate. Its effects on sea are so distressing that a squall would be preferable; so far at least as feeling goes. Profound melancholy seized us almost as soon as we left. It seemed distressing to go to Capri or anywhere; peace and home were all it was possible to care for. In vain we approached Capri; in vain its rocky front rose in the morning sun; in vain the sea broke against the foundations of the romantic isle — it was all weariness of spirit.

Yet Capri is a wonderful little place. It is a steep mass of rock, rising abruptly from the sea — a miniature Gibraltar — which the French took, however, from the English under Murat's reign; but Salicetti's saying to the king, "I found them in it, but I cannot believe they got in," is not a foolish saying, when one sees those wild and perilous peaks. Another memorial is attached to them. Here Tiberius lived, and thought to have died; but he did not. He was smothered at Baia.

Yet the old eagle had chosen his eyrie well. Inaccessible, wild, yet beautiful, Capri was the place for him. He left Rome for ever — he forbade any to dare and follow him; and, guarded by soldiers, he wandered through the beautiful places of Campania, vainly seeking one sufficiently secure. At length he remembered this lone spot in the sea, guarded and fortified by nature — a rock which the most wily enemy could not approach unseen, a solitude sheltered against the north wind, freshened by the sea breeze, and withal pleasant as a garden. Here he built himself twelve palaces, in which he

hid his cruel and degraded old age from the revenge of the injured and the scorn of the world.

Yet the violent death against which he had guarded himself overtook him; the reprobation and the shame he had thought to conceal for ever are written in the pages of avenging history. And even after so many ages, the first feeling which the name of Capri awakens is a feeling of disgust. We know that Tiberius lived here, that here he planned his proscriptions, that here he cast into the sea the victims whose bodies were washed on the shores of Baia; and beautiful as these steep rocks rise from the blue waters — graceful, though abrupt, as their outline appears on the blue background of sky, we remember that the place has been sullied.

But Capri fortunately possesses other attractions besides its historical memorials. It has one of the loveliest things in all Italy — the Grot Azura.

A little boat, with its sunburnt boatman, came alongside ours. We kept close to the steep cliffs,

and in the shadow of mighty rocks. A sea, blue and dark as indigo, beat against them, and flowed around us. Below the blue waves, clinging to reefs, we saw the red sea-fruit — red as coral — so transparent and clear was the water. Yet it looked a perilous place, as it really is. One could imagine perfidious mermaids here, sudden storms, and fearful wrecks, and buried treasures, and if Giuseppe had said, "Signore, here divers go down for pearls of immense value, and, by that rock, a Spanish galleon was lost two hundred years ago — it was coming from the New World, laden with Peruvian diamonds and Mexican gold, and every now and then some lucky fisherman brings up a lump!" I think we would have believed him. But Giuseppe is a sad, veracious widower, with three daughters, and he said nothing of the kind.

At length we reached a low arch in the cliff. We entered the little boat, and bent our heads on our knees. When we looked up, we had left day — we were floating in azure. We had entered the blue gloom of the grotto. Words cannot describe colour; here even painting fails. All we

looked at was blue rocky wall and roof, sea, and surrounding air; but it was not the blue of the Italian sky pervaded with light. We saw every object distinctly, yet a sunless, vapoury, azure ether seemed to surround us.

Its colour is the only hold this fairy-like place gives to description. It is but a grotto of moderate size, into which the sea flows, and with stalactites pendent from its roof. Blue surrounds you, save where you see in white the arch through which you have passed. Within you see nothing, save a rock and real red coral growing below the water; and, by another magic trick of this magic place, everything that enters that water, from the boatman's oar to your own hand, shines bright and white as silver.

When the sea is still, the entrance to the Grot Azura is safe and easy. When the waves beat against the arched opening, it is impossible to get in. The whole coast of Capri is dangerous: this spot is particularly so. Daring travellers, in whom curiosity proved stronger than fear, and who attempted to enter this sanctuary, spite the prohibi-

tion of foul weather, have been repulsed by furious waves, and have held themselves happy to escape with life. There is a half-painful, half-ludicrous story of a gentleman who got in easily enough, but who, the weather having changed whilst he was examining the grotto, could not get out. He remained a prisoner three days, during which the waves that filled the archway prevented almost all intercourse with him. A loaf of bread, however, was thrown in to him, and was borne in by the sea; the rock was his bed, house, and refuge until the waves subsided, and allowed him to be released.

We had seen the grotto, and were satisfied. Scarcely were we out, when Scirocco resumed its powers. The donkeys on the beach, the ruins of the imperial palace up on the lofty cliff, tempted us not. We cared for nothing — nothing but to go away, and be back in Sorrento. We said so, and left Capri without having landed.

Amongst our rowers was a strong, handsome lad of fourteen, or so; with surprise I saw that he was crying. I had a vague suspicion of the truth; was he hungry?

"Oh! no, not at all," he said, but he looked very dismal.

As we approached Sorrento his brow cleared; when we landed he was chuckling with delight he could not conceal. I cross-questioned Giuseppe on another occasion, and I learned the truth.

The poor lad was dying with hunger. Not one of the four men had tasted a morsel of bread, or drunk a drop of water that day, and it was long past noon when we reached Sorrento. We were not accustomed then to the abstemiousness and to the patience of southern Italians. I had never occurred to us that these men had not eaten a hearty breakfast before beginning their hard day's work; still less did we suspect that they would not take the liberty of asking our leave to land for five minutes at Capri, and procure some refreshment; but of this they did not dream; we were foreigners; and if the southern Italian now and then cheats the foreigner, he is none the less the foreigner's slave.

We returned to England, and there heard

strange accounts of the beauties of Capri; we resolved, if ever we went back to Southern Italy, to visit that little Eden, and this resolve we fulfilled a few days ago.

The rain had ceased, the sky was serene, the sun shone gloriously, now was the time for donkeys and excursions. We went to Santa Maria della Neve, passing through Massa. Capri is, unfortunately, not visible from Sorrento. Its bold outline of rock is hidden behind the sloping hill, called the Capo of Sorrento; but from the neighbouring village of Massa, it can be seen; and one of the best views is from the garden of the telegraph. There, too, we had been two years before; a young woman, with a baby in her arms, had offered us roses, and a vivid image of the rustic garden, through which we rode, had remained on my mind.

Scarcely had our donkey-man opened the door this time, when the same young woman appeared. She saw us, and sprang to the rose-bush; the baby was now a fair-haired child who clung to her skirts; but he alone shewed tokens of time. The

brown house, the ancient wall, with one of its external sides blackened with smoke — it was evidently used as a fireplace — the garden and its roses looked as if we had left them yesterday.

We alighted, and climbed up a barren and stony height; faggots of myrtle lay scattered around us; happy land where the myrtle blazes in the kitchen, and where the kitchen is outside the house!

Below us lay a glorious sea, with lovely hills sloping down into it, and rocky Capri to bound its horizon. This view is a favourite one with painters, and well it may be; it unites grace and boldness. We lingered awhile, and then rode away, up narrow paths, on through Mentichio, one of the loveliest spots around Sorrento. Day was waning when we reached Santa Maria della Neve.

Our Lady of the Snow, is the name of the solitary chapel. Alone, without a house, without a tree, it stands on a bleak mountain peak. Villages and dwellings are indeed within sight, yet a sense of desolateness surrounds the spot. Sterile and sunburnt, ever swept by bleak or scorching winds,

and overlooking the two noble Bays of Naples and Salerno, it leaves on the mind an impression which more beautiful places cannot produce. The Bay of Naples we see daily, but the mountains which enclose Sorrento hide that of Salerno from our view. Mountains, likewise, concealed the towns of Amalfi and Salerno, but farther on, by the misty beach of the most remote mountains, we saw reddish spots, and we decided that these must be the temples of Pœstum. In vain our ciuciario declared we were mistaken; our opinion was the most agreeable to ourselves, and we persisted in it.

We went the next day to the Camaldoli, a deserted convent of Franciscan monks, which shines like a white house on the summit of one of the mountains we see daily from our windows. We passed through the wild valley of Arola, where a beggar woman gave us change; through Arola itself, where I saw a handsome girl standing in a doorway, with one arm thrown over her head like one of antique genii, through a little wood of chestnuts, where cows were feeding, and children gathered the fallen chestnuts, and where another

beggar woman was adorned with a pair of picturesque earrings, one pink and one blue, and finally we reached the Camaldoli, where we found a garden of roses in full bloom, and a fine terrace overlooking a splendid country and two seas.

We could not see Capri, but its rocky peaks rose above the Cape of Sorrento. The sea was blue and still, softly blew the western wind; it was a day to sail away to a Mediterranean island, see blue grottoes, and ride up rocky mountains. We resolved to think about it; but it was destined that we should do more than think.

We had not long been back when Giuseppe Mici made his appearance. He had been far away up the coast, and a lady of decayed fortunes had given him a piece of family antiquity to sell. He opened his handkerchief and displayed a red silk quilt, trimmed with gold and silver lace, which would have been very handsome, but for two slight objections. There were two round holes in the silk, and the gold and silver had well nigh vanished from the lace. We said so, but Giuseppe was so strong on the merits of the quilt, as a piece

of antiquity, that we dropped the subject and asked if the weather was good to go to Capri. Excellent, he replied. Then we go to-morrow, we said. And not satisfied with going ourselves, we took Carmela with us, her mother, after a good deal of hesitation, having given her consent.

The care with which Italian women are watched is almost ludicrous. We have a grey-headed servant who lives with her brother — the servants one has here rarely will sleep out of their own homes — and whom the said brother watches with Turkish jealousy. He allowed her to come to us, because we had no men whose presence could cast a shadow on the fair name of his sister; for Maria, as she told us the first day we had her, has neither father nor mother, and is a timid orphan girl. Out of Sorrento she has never stirred, save to go once by stealth to Castellamare, and if her brother had known it, he would have given her a beating, so great would have been his indignation at this breach of propriety. Naples, of course, she has never seen, and never whilst that jealous brother lives will Maria see it. Great, therefore,

was the favour of being allowed to take with us one of the prettiest girls of Sorrento, even though it was only for a day, and Carmela was to return to her own home before the Ave Maria announced the close of day.

Before leaving, we gave clear instructions to her mother to let the cream thicken on our day's milk for that evening's tea; that important matter settled, we walked down through their garden to the beach. The boat was waiting, the morning was bright and chill, it was a fine morning, and Guiseppe said it would be a fine day.

Soon we passed the Capo of Sorrento, and its heathen ruins; Massa and its little port; Capri was now within view; the wind was for us, the sails of the little boat were spread, the four rowers rested. The sea might have been smoother, and we might have been more comfortable, but Capri is only two hours and a half from Sorrento; we reached it at length, had some trouble in landing, and were at once pestered to get up on the backs of the dozen of donkeys who had appeared on the beach as our boat had come within view. Giuseppe had de-

clared that it would be better to visit the grotto later, so we could not take refuge in the brown boatman's boat. I asked for a chair; a civil, good-looking woman at once said, "Would we go up to her rooms in the house opposite?" We accepted willingly. We were not in the town, but at the Marina of Capri, and the nearest hotel seemed far.

The house had two stories, with an arched and covered gallery to the first, and an open gallery and iron railing to the second. We went up a broken stone staircase, we crossed rooms, half of which were demolished; we went up another staircase, and entered a narrow unroofed corridor; to the right were the open doors of rooms, where girls were winding blue silk on large reels; to the left, scarcely below the level of the passage, was a little arid garden where a fig-tree grew. This corridor ended in a small bare-looking kitchen, and in a door which our civil, good-looking woman opened. We entered a large windowless room, with all sorts of curious odds and ends scattered about; thence we passed into another room which, for Italy, was a luxurious one. It was the first of

its class I had entered, and I noticed it curiously. The window opened on the balcony, and the balcony overlooked the whole beach. But it had other advantages. Besides its ample bed, it possessed a little dressing-table, with a little looking-glass; a little chest of drawers, with a square glass-house above it, and in that glass-house a waxen image of the child Jesus dressed in white satin, with nosegays of artificial flowers at his feet; both table and drawers, too, were of walnut wood, and were covered with rugs, and to crown the whole, there were eighteen images of saints, in black frames, hanging around the white-washed walls, and neither more nor less than four clean straw chairs in the room.

When we were rested, our civil hostess, whose name was Pascarella, proved to have donkeys, which we naturally hired, to go and visit the ruins of the Palace of Tiberius; but the thing was to get up on these donkeys. The Capri donkeys live under the law of association. They belong to a few women, who are pledged not to compete, not to set one donkey above another, and tempt

prudent travellers with the economy of a carlino. Great, therefore, was the wrath of Pascarella's sisters when they perceived the treachery of which she had been guilty. Oh! that was why she had deluded us up to her room, and she called that fair dealing and good faith? The language was stronger and more eloquent than I need set it down; but Pascarella's equanimity was not disturbed — not one word did she answer, not one attempt at justification did she make. She merely winked at me with her left eye to show me the right donkeys, for they were all about us, and a fatal mistake might easily have been committed; and having seen us all three fairly on, she left the beach with us, unmoved at the angry cries that followed her.

The town of Capri is built high amongst mountains. It clings to their sides, and sinks down between them in a crescent-like shape, which is very striking when seen on the blue sky. Of the town itself we saw nothing, save the gate, a piazza, a church-door, and the narrowest and dirtiest of streets. It was soon crossed. Capri looks but a

bleak and arid rock when seen after the luxuriant verdure of Sorrento. The road we followed showed us nothing but olive-gardens on one hand and fields full of the prickly pear on the other. I admired the mountains, which are bold and fine, but I wondered what could make Mr. — prefer this wild place to the loveliness of Sorrento.

The ruins of the palace of Tiberius stand on the very edge of a steep cliff. They are interesting. A sun-burnt peasant — the owner of the land, I believe — showed us over them. He had a bold, intelligent forehead, and sarcastic lip. He preceded us, and I whispered to Carmela some account of the character and deeds of Tiberius — how he was a great tyrant, and used to throw people into the sea, that carried their bodies as far as Baia, &c.

Carmela seemed horrified; and, casting around her a look of disgust, seemed to think, "If he was such a bad man, why do we come here?"

"This," began our guide, pausing in a little square, still paved with ancient mosaic, "was one of the twelve villas which Tiberius possessed in Capri. In this one alone, however, he slept."

"Twelve!" whispered Carmela, opening her brown eyes. "That bad gentleman must have been very rich!"

"But, Carmela, did I not tell you he was an Emperor? Why, he was much richer, much more powerful, than the King of Naples!"

"These," continued our guide, pointing to some closed doors, "were the rooms of Tiberius. We keep our cows in them, and they have a great many calves. There is nothing worth seeing in the rooms."

He delivered this little speech with satirical emphasis, and went on.

"Ten days ago," he began again, and stopping as he spoke, "we had a violent storm. A thunderbolt fell on the habitation of the hermit who lives up here. It ruined the altar of his little chapel, and demolished the room next to that where he sleeps. I little thought to see him alive in the morning."

He pointed to a heap of rubbish that encumbered the earth, then to the battered wall and roof

from which it had fallen. For the first time, Carmela seemed really interested.

Whilst we were looking, the hermit appeared. He stood on a little terrace above us, in a picturesque attitude, of which he was, I am sure, quite conscious. Let him! — it is something to have seen a hermit, whose black cap, brown face, white beard, woollen gown, beads, and long staff seemed taken from the stanza of an old ballad; and it is something, too, to have found him among the ruins of the palace of a Roman tyrant, living alone on that wild peak around which the sea ever roars, and on which the thunder of heaven — *Patiens quia æternus* — that spared the bad and the strong, strikes the little home of the weak.

We looked at the ruins of the theatre, where the Imperial Majesty of Rome was amused; then we visited the hermit, who proved to have a soft voice and a pleasant face. Cold and bare looked the little room that remained to him; the chapel too had suffered sadly, but Carmela informed me, when we had left the place, that the altar cloth was of the finest quality. We visited what there

was still to be seen, and the ruins are but a fragment of the ancient palace, which extended far down the mountain — then our guide took us to the lighthouse, whence Tiberius had his victims cast into the sea, and said, emphatically: —

“From this rock my father was throwing a log of wood into the sea, when he fell forwards and was dashed down; his body was never found.”

We were shocked, but without showing any emotion, our guide pursued: —

“On that other rock, six months afterwards, my grandfather was milking his cows, when a blast of wind whirled him off. Half his body was found amongst the rocks four months later.”

He gave us this grim piece of family history with a sort of satisfaction at its very grimness, then he took a stone, cast it into the sea, and bade us notice how long it took to descend.

A faint, low splash, scarcely audible, announced at length that it had reached the bottom.

We had done with Tiberius; *Timberio* they call him in Capri; we had still to see the Grotta del

Matrimonio, the Natural Arch and the Azure Grot, after which we might order our boat and be off.

The Grotta del Matrimonio is an ancient temple, built in the rock; we were informed by the man who led us to it, that it was the church of Tiberius; all his family were married there, thence, says tradition, its name. Learning takes an opposite view of the question; Mythra it declares was the name of the grot, consecrated to the worship of that eastern god. From Mythra, tradition made matrimonio, and from matrimonio, the story of the marriages.

The Natural Arch is what its name implies. A rock thrown by Nature over other rocks, and raised amongst them an eternal monument of her greatness and power. Its great size and sharp peaks, its splendid ochre-colour and bold contour; above all the wild rocky spot where it stands, with steep cliffs above, and a foaming sea below, and murmuring winds ever sweeping past, these, and the consciousness that a careless step might cast you down and make you perish miserably, where none, save the bird of prey, could come to seek you,

produce a due effect on the mind. With the latter sort of attractions, Capri is abundantly provided; you can scarcely walk a hundred steps without meeting with some lamentable history or fearful tradition. Carmela was so alarmed at all she heard, that she could not be persuaded to accompany us to the Natural Arch. I consoled her with the prospect of the Azure Grot.

But when we came down to the beach, the sea looked blue and rough. The Azure Grot, indeed! There was no thinking of it. I went up to Giuseppe Mici, who stood leaning against his boat in a melancholy attitude.

"What about the weather?" I asked.

"Non si puo partire," was his ominous reply.

What! we could not leave; we could not go back to Sorrento that night!

Giuseppe shook his head, and pointed to the smoke of Vesuvius; it came sweeping down the mountain, trailing along the sea, sent by the wind full in our face. Whilst the grey smoke was blown in that direction, there was no leaving Capri in a four-oared boat.

All sorts of strange ideas came into my head. I remembered the stories I had heard in Sorrento, of people being kept in Capri for weeks, I thought of the weather-bound Greeks before the siege of Troy, and the anxious looks of Carmela's mother, entreating us to be careful, and the milk thickening into cream for our tea, and finally I thought of our purse, which was anything but full, and the high charges of Italian hotels. There was nothing for it, however, but to go to the next hotel and begin with the unpleasant confession that we must leave, when the weather would allow us, without discharging our bill.

We had paid Pascarella, but she still stood by us. She probably guessed the motive of our annoyed looks, for, first informing us that she had already lodged a gentleman and lady in the same predicament with ourselves, she ended by offering us her rooms. We were delighted with the proposal. In five minutes it was all decided. Carmela was to be our cook, Giuseppe our courier, and Pascarella our maid-of-all-work.

Thus provided with a stylish household, we

entered our new home. We had not been long in it when we made a few discoveries. The kitchen was very imperfectly provided with cooking utensils, and the comfortable room, with eighteen framed pictures of saints, and its balcony overlooking the beach, had no panes to its window. But it had shutters for the night; and in this mild climate windows are never closed in the day, unless to keep out the heat. The kitchen was a more serious objection; but even that had its good side. If Carmela's talents had no fair scope, we could at least rely on the important fact that her dish of maccaroni had not, three days before, been served up on the table of some other traveller.

Carmela herself was well pleased with the arrangement, and confidentially informed me that Pascarella was a very good woman. How she had made the discovery she did not mention; but, indeed, we had no reason to complain of Pascarella. She borrowed right and left until she furnished the kitchen — *tant bien que mal*. We spoke of the cold floors, and at once her baby's counterpane of sheepskin, and her husband's shaggy sailor jacket

were placed beneath our feet. To crown all, she placed unlimited confidence in our honesty. I opened the drawer of the dressing-table, and found a handful of coppers and silver. I mentioned the matter to her; but she only laughed, shrugged her shoulders, and said she had no other place to put it in, and that it would do there. And I had too much respect for the trust of this primitive islander to insist on her removing it.

Our discomforts, such as they were, did not occupy us much. We sat by the window, looking at the sea. It came roaring up the beach, ever more furious; it dashed rather than brought the fishing-boats on land — like so many nutshells they danced on the foaming top of the waves. The men were all Neapolitans — brown caps, linen shirts, linen trowsers, and bare legs formed their costume — they were all but black in hue; and bold, fearless men they looked. As their boats neared the shore, they jumped into the foaming surf, and with wild gestures and wild cries, they dragged them on land; fortunate when they could do so. Many were sent back again

and again by the force of the waves, and came in washed and dripping with water. We looked at the glistening fish packed in baskets, and promised ourselves a luxurious dish for the morrow. Vain hope! spite the angry sea and more angry wind, whose united roaring would scarcely let us sleep for the whole of that night, one of these frail boats, manned, it is true, by ten men, went off with all the fish before morning. Ten lives were risked on a stormy sea, in a dark night, along perilous and rocky coasts, with more perilous currents, for the luxury of a great city. And we count fish dear!

Long before day we got up to look at the smoke of Vesuvius. Alas! it still came down the mountain — it still swept along the sea, full in our face. The sky was grey, the sea was crested with foam. There was no going back to Sorrento that day.

It was Sunday, and, with Giuseppe as our guide, we went to a pretty little church near the beach. Giuseppe, fearing we were not comfortable with Pascarella, had gone to a hotel, and obtained

credit for us. He had made terms, too, for our board and lodging; and so well had he bargained, that we felt convinced our starvation must be the object of the hotel-keeper. Giuseppe told us all about it on the way, but we declined peremptorily. It was some time before the priest made his appearance. In the meanwhile, and to keep one another from mischief, the girls, who all knelt near the altar — the men are kept behind in the churches of Southern Italy — began singing, not saying, the rosary. The priest appeared, and said mass, but still they went on. At length the bell for consecration silenced them; but we were not long quiet — the sacristan soon began the litanies. When he had done, the priest turned to the congregation, and preached a good, sensible sermon on the gospel of the day, after which all rose and dispersed. Two things I noticed — the women were handsomer, and the people looked more comfortable than in Sorrento.

There are two towns in Capri — Capri which we had seen; Anacapri, to which a road of five hundred steps, cut in the cliffs that skirt the sea,

leads native and foreigner, for the friendly name of forestieri, strangers, is mutually exchanged between Capri and Anacapri. Capri we knew, but Anacapri had the merit of novelty. With Giuseppe to show us the way, we went on that Sunday afternoon.

The day was grey and cloudy — a dreamy autumn day, that reminded me of northern coasts. I had been very much disappointed with Capri on the preceding day, but now I began to acknowledge that it had a sort of wild, solitary charm. Steep sterile mountains rose above us to our left, a grey, stormy sea foamed far below us to our right. Truly it was the place for a jealous Tiberius to retire in — a natural citadel of inaccessible rocks, defended by treacherous seas — an eyrie whence the Roman eagle could survey and watch the surrounding coasts with little dread of open might, still less of perfidious surprise.

But the road, though beautiful and wild — though blooming on either side with lovely flowers — though crowned with the grey ruins of Barbarossa's castle, and protected by the little chapel of

Sant Antonio, that patron of solitude — seemed none the less an endless road, climbing up to the very sky.

At length we reached Anacapri, a white, clean, comfortable-looking little place, where we saw none save well-dressed sailors, and smart and handsome-looking women. We entered the church on the piazza — the wax candles were lit, the priest was at the foot of the altar, an invisible organ was playing, and a decorous congregation, seated on benches, was singing with rude harmony.

"The people look happy here," I said to Giuseppe, when we went out.

"Eccellenza, they are (every one is, or can be an 'eccellenza' in Italy). They are all sailors, and they have all a little bit of land left to them from father to son; and, though the soil is not good, they are all thriving. If you were not so tired, I would show you their campo santo."

We declared we were not tired at all; to the campo santo we went. Down a lonely lane we found this holy field of the dead. A white wall shut it in, and an iron gate closed it. Giuseppe

shook it; but though we saw a lamp burning in a little chapel at the end of a gravel-path, no one answered his call. We saw, but could not enter.

I have seen some country churchyards, all beautiful in their way — none that I liked so well as the little campo santo of Anacapri. Yews and willows gave shade to its blooming flowers and rows of black wooden crosses. Not one monument did I see — nothing but that frail and perishable token of an immortal hope — nothing but the equality of the dead, all sleeping peacefully side by side, all laid at rest in the same earth, and waiting there for the same call. There was a Latin inscription at the gate. Whether the crosses bore any writing I could not see, for they all faced the little chapel.

“Signorina,” said Giuseppe, “I have seen all the finest campo santos in Italy, but when I first saw this little campo santo, reared by sailors, on the summit of a mountain, in a little bit of an island, I marvelled much.”

And as Giuseppe’s opinion is the very best

comment that can be made on this pretty place, I have transcribed it here.

Carmela, too, admired it much — infinitely more than the ruins of the palace of Tiberius, who, from the account she has heard of him, is no favourite of hers. I had seen her looking very serious on the preceding evening, with her cheek on her hand, and her eyes fixed on the floor. I supposed she was thinking of her home and her mother watching for our boat, like the mother of Sisera for the chariot of her son; but no; Carmela was thinking of Tiberius.

Suddenly looking up, and fixing her beautiful brown eyes on my face, she said, with sad gravity:

“Signorina, I think it will have been very difficult for that Tiberius to be saved.”

“Tiberius was a Pagan,” I said.

Carmela shook her head as much as to say that his case was settled. I was, therefore, not surprised at her preferring the Christian burial-place to the Pagan palace. But Paganism, too, has its charms; and one of the prettiest pastoral remains that I have yet seen in Italy met us on our

way down. Two shepherd-boys had climbed on the flat roof of the little chapel of Sant Antonio. In an indolent and graceful attitude, one of them leaned back, and played a few sweet, though imperfect notes on a rustic pipe. Around them grazed their little flock of white sheep and young kids. One of them, a brown and white goat, had climbed up a rock, and, stretching its slender neck, it cropped the green shoots of a myrtle-bush. We had but to change the chapel of Sant Antonio into a temple of the god Pan, to be back to the days of classical song.

But its women are, after all, the most beautiful piece of antiquity which Capri possesses; truly the blood of the Greek has come down to them undefiled. I never saw in all Italy such lovely creatures. They are tall and stately, yet exquisitely graceful, with pure oval faces, dark eyes, soft and downcast, and a sweet dignity in their aspect and their bearing that made them look to me like so many virgin queens. I could not think, with patience of the comments I had heard on the so called *mésalliance* of the two English gentlemen

who married Capri girls. Women like those we saw are ladies, for their beauty is not mere beauty of form and colour, it is the perfection of womanhood. They may be peasants, they may be ignorant, but rude or vulgar they cannot be with such noble, intellectual faces. Was Nausicaë the less a princess for washing her father's linen? For my part, I looked at them, and became a sudden convert to the theory of races. I had already seen, two years before, Agrippina, Faustina, Messalina, and other Roman Empresses revived under the aspect of Roman girls; but these before me were the daughters of an earlier and a nobler race than the Roman. Theseus, Ajax, Agamemnon, the most heroic of men, Helen, Briseis, the loveliest of women, were the progenitors of the women of Capri. Carmela was, like us, lost in admiration. "Belle Donne," she kept repeating, "belle donne," and when a pretty girl like Carmela praises women whose beauty throws her in the shade, who can doubt the praise?

But even the beauty of the Capri women could not make us forget the unpleasantness of being

kept in Capri against our will. We could see the Capo of Sorrento quite near; the sun shone on the white houses of Massa, and yet we could not stir. That little bit of foaming sea could not be crossed; not at least without such peril as we did not choose to face. We had rather sharply taxed Giuseppe that morning with bringing us out in bad weather, and he had replied so seriously, "Signore, on the honour of my daughters, I thought the weather would be good," that we could say no more; but of course we were just as cross — Carmela excepted; she bore it all with Italian sweetness — and Giuseppe, perceiving this, thought proper to treat us like little children. In the evening he appeared with a bundle of the pretty straw-work, in which the women of Capri excel. Straw-work, indeed, when he knew the state of our purse.

"You can pay in Sorrento," said Giuseppe.

"Money!" exclaimed Pascarella, laughing, "I can give you money."

There is as yet in this part of Italy, at least, great trust in the honour and wealth of foreigners.

Thus comforted, we looked at the straw-work; it consists of horsehair, silk, and straw, and is extremely pretty. Every lady who visits Capri buys the making of a bonnet, and not one out of ten would look at it if it were sold in Oxford Street. But the pleasures which straw-work gives last but little. The wind still moaned, the sea still roared, we were still prisoners. I rose in the night to look out; I saw a starless sky, a dark sea, a broad line of white foam, and the boats lying in rows on the beach. Some were lit, and under the tent-like cover of one I saw an old fisherman sitting alone and smoking placidly. The Italian fisherman's boat is his house. He cooks, eats, drinks, and sleeps in it. Even Giuseppe and his men did not dream of sleeping in some dwelling on land. They had the boat, and its benches and bare boards, with the sails to throw over all — what more could they wish for?

The next morning was sunny, and Giuseppe, spite the rough sea, thought we might go at noon. Vain hope, which noon dispelled; yet we had no reason to regret our stay in Capri that day. An Irish gentleman, Mr. W—, and an English priest,

Mr. C—, having heard of our predicament, came with the kindest offers of assistance. We had never seen them before; we shall, perhaps, never see them again, yet how could we forget such kindness? Our purse was not yet quite empty, and Giuseppe held it all but certain that we could leave the next day; we declined, therefore, with many thanks, but we accepted with pleasure Mr. W—'s proposal of showing us some of the walks of Capri in the afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. W— reside near the palace of Tiberius; Mr. C— was at Ross's hotel in Capri; we were at Pascarella's on the beach; we agreed for convenience sake to meet on the road that leads to the palace of Tiberius.

We had seen Capri and Anacapri, and as the whole island is something like three miles long, a mile and a-half broad, and nine miles round, we thought we knew it pretty well. Mere delusion; every step in Capri is a new scene overlooking a new view, every view seems more wild, more beautiful than the last. Mr. W— evidently loved Capri; he spoke of it with affection, and knew it

well. He led us along a path above which rose the remains of the carriage road of Tiberius, to a terrace overlooking the islet where Augustus caused his friend to be buried within view of his palace, in order that every day his eyes might rest on the spot. Thence we climbed up, not without peril, the mountain side, where we found a myrtle still in bloom; we came to a spot whence we saw three blue seas, with steep mountain peaks rising between them, and finally we reached the edge of a cliff, whence we obtained the grandest view we had yet seen in Italy.

The sea was of the deepest and most intense azure; the islet of the Sirens burned on it like blocks of rock in flame. The Punta della Campanella, the steep arid mountains glowed like fire on the sky. Everywhere mountains stretched along the coast, and islands lay scattered on the sea, and every mountain and islet had a name famous in classical story. The sun sank, the glow vanished, gloom fell on the splendid scene, and another charm than that of magnificence followed. I knelt on the edge of the cliff, and, holding fast to some

shrubs, I looked over. Precipitous cliffs descended to the sea; a white edge of foam curled around their rocky base; the wild-looking *arco naturale* rose below us, everything was savage, grand, and sublime.

I have always found that there was a charm wanting in Italy. The charm of grey days, and cloudy skies, and tempestuous seas; a charm which the wildest northern shores, the most barren of northern mountain solitudes possesses, and which sinks deep into the heart of man, and falls like repose on the strife and weariness of life. But after seeing Capri I thought so no more. It rises, a lone rock amidst the seas, exposed to all their changes, and beaten by their waves. Winds pass over it in all their might, autumn mists roll down its sides, and a solitude, which the presence of the foreigner rarely disturbs, guards every beautiful haunt, every wild spot, where time passes, and the dreamer who watches the grey clouds rolling along the sky need not reckon the hours. And, to make his solitude more complete, he may be pretty sure that, whilst the north wind blows, he is fairly shut in Capri.

But our exile ended with the next morning. The sky was clear, the sea was comparatively still. Giuseppe Mici pointed to it triumphantly when I opened our window, which, to Pascarella's honour, had become duly glazed; his men were getting the boat in readiness; we left without waiting for breakfast. Pascarella's bill, I am sorry to say, was extravagantly high; but we did what people should always do here; we resolutely refused to pay dearer for indifferent rooms in Capri than we paid for excellent rooms in Sorrento. I told Pascarella we were sorry to leave her dissatisfied, to which she replied with thorough Italian good temper and naïveté: —

“Oh! never mind *that*, ladies.”

The sea was so rough that Giuseppe landed us at Massa, whence we had to walk home; but we were out of Capri, and cared for nothing.

Since her return home, Carmela has been entertaining her family with accounts of her adventures. She has given to her sister, Maddalena, the history I gave her of Tiberius; but Maddalena, on learning

that amongst the victims of Tiberius there were women, has proved sceptical.

"It is very likely, indeed, that women would go to a palace to be cast from a rock into the sea."

Without attempting to settle that matter, Carmela has come to a positive conclusion concerning the fate of Tiberius in the next world. She is all but sure that he went "dritt all inferno."

NINTH CHAPTER.

Christmas.

TIME has passed since Carmela came to the positive, though sad, conclusion concerning the fate of Tiberius in the next world, which I have recorded; but the adventures of her journey are still present to her mind, and travelling has awakened an ambitious desire in her heart. I found her, the other day, sitting behind her loom, weaving a cotton check for the use of the family. It was green and brown, with a thread of scarlet running through. I admired it. Carmela listened to the praise with the modesty of conscious merit, and confidentially told me that, if she can, she will return to Capri, learn the art of making straw-work, and introduce it in Sorrento. But this is a profound secret as yet. Thus knowledge and inventions travel.

Soon after our return from Capri, the weather broke; and since then we have had the long, in-

cessant rains which fertilize the thirsty Italian earth. We have them still, and with them that greyness of clouds which I formerly missed, and storms such as one expects in northern summers, and which here are only known in winter. There broke one a few days ago, the grandest I ever saw. The thunder rolled amongst the mountains with a full, deep sound; the lightning darted and played across the sky like a bright serpent; then, suddenly, the house shook with a clap, and a line of fire descended straight into the heaving sea. The storm was exhausted, the sky soon cleared, and we had a glimpse of that brilliancy which here turns winter into a sort of second spring.

. The extreme mildness of the climate makes such a place as this delightful to chilly people. Naples, indeed, is warmer, but from this quiet retreat it seems noisy and tumultuous; and we have not yet been able to find Sorrento cold. Our drawing-room is large — it is all doors and windows — yet a brass dish, in a wooden frame, filled with hot ashes, is sometimes more fire than

we can bear. We open the door on the loggia to let the place cool.

I went out upon that loggia the other evening, the moon was shining over mountain and sea; an English summer night is colder. Indeed, we have none of the signs of winter here. Perpetual verdure clothes the mountains, the orchard trees never lose their foliage, the roses do not cease to bloom in the garden. Every day I go down and gather them from the tree. Long walks, it is true, are out of the question — the earth is saturated with rain; but every season brings its pleasures. And Christmas here, though its joy does not take the aspect of coal fires, plum pudding, and roast beef, is merry Christmas for all that.

Three years ago, we were in Rome. We heard the Pope saying mass in Saint Peter's, and witnessed all the magnificence with which the Church commemorates the birth of Christ. A few days later, we stood at the gate of Saint Antonio to witness the blessing of the animals. In memory of the ox and the ass in the stable of

Bethlehem, they are yearly brought there to receive a solemn benediction. We saw them all. From the holy father's milk-white palfrey, with velvet housings, to the contadino's donkey, with its bunch of ribbons and the fresh red rose stuck by his hairy cheek, they passed before us in endless procession. To crown all, we heard the little children preach in the church of Aracœli. I still remember the little blue-eyed girl of three, who lisped, but could not finish her sermon, and the undaunted little lady of seven, who went through it all with easy grace; but, for all that, I think that a Christmas in Sorrento will bear comparison with any Christmas, even with a Roman one.

It is ushered in with an awful slaughter of pigs, with festive preparations of every kind, and with an interchange of convivial presents. For some days before and after Christmas, but especially before, you cannot enter the streets or lanes of Sorrento without meeting men and boys gravely bearing on their heads the large, flat, tray-like baskets they here call "sporte," with a

dainty white cloth thrown over them to conceal their contents from the curious. Three of these sporte have found their way to us.

The first that came contained a large quantity of those little red-cheeked apples, which the Italians hold for a rare and dainty fruit. I have noticed the sparkle of their eye when you ask them if it is good. Good! It is delicious. We were but half deceived; yet we gave these said apples a fair trial, and raw, boiled, or roasted, we found them shamefully deficient, unworthy of a place on the poorest London stall. The fact is, an Italian does not know what an apple is. However, this first sporta held something besides the little deceivers. It held large and magnificent oranges, with their stems and shining leaves; lemons, long, yellow, full of juice, and which the natives call bread lemons, and eat in slices, and little tender green lemons — oh! luxury unknown out of the land where the lemon grows — just plucked in their sweet unripeness from the tree. The peculiar flavour of these little green lemons must be left to imagination; it cannot be described.

The second sporta, or rather canestra, for it was an humble offering on a small scale, was part of a present which the contadina, who gave it to us, had received from the mountains of Arola. She sent oranges and lemons in summer, and got her winter return. It held the ~~red-cheeked~~ apples, of course, cones of the large, flat Italian pines that give a peculiar character to the Italian landscape, and which, (the cones, of course), are publicly sold and roasted in the streets of Naples; sorbinelle and chestnuts innumerable. Some were raw, more were baked and strung together in the shape of a lozenge. These baked chestnuts are as hard, or almost, as marble; but they are not without a certain pleasing taste, which the owners of good teeth can appreciate.

The third sporta was in higher style, and altogether an ambitious affair. Its contents, when emptied out, covered a whole table. Apples, of course, dried figs, dried cherries, green lemons, pears, (as good as the apples, if not better), nuts, without end, made a splendid show.

A blue paper, when opened, showed some

excellent sweets, made by the fair hands of the noble ladies of the monastery of Saint Paul, who, like all nuns, have distinguished talents in that line; then came a large delicious melon from Rocca di Papa, and finally a plate with the national cotone.

one

The day before Christmas is a fast-day, and, unless a Neapolitan observes the fast by having a cotone for his supper, he is not happy.

The cotone is to him, what roast beef and plum pudding are to a thorough-bred Englishman on Christmas day. What is Christmas eve without that dish? It is not Christmas at all. Accordingly, a real Neapolitan — the Sorrentini have a hankering after the cotone, but do not go into excesses — a real Neapolitan will, I have been assured, over and over, sell his bed and sleep on the floor rather than not sup on this cotone. And what do you think this cotone is? Why, it is an eel, twisted in a circle, with laurel-leaves around it, and three green lemons within. It is to be cut in small pieces; each piece is put between two laurel-leaves; the whole is fried in oil, served up

hot, and eaten with the juice of the green lemons squeezed over it, and a very savoury dish it is.

The religious ceremonies begin on Christmas eve, and are continued the whole night long. One of them is peculiar to Sorrento. I had often heard of it from the Sorrentini, and greatly wished to see it.

At six we went to the church of the Congregazionella. It is kept by the Servi di Maria, who are all nobles; vain relic of feudal times and of a lost power. A very dashing young aristocrat, Dom Francesco, no sooner understood that we were foreigners, than he handed us to the best front seats — one constantly receives these marks of hospitable courtesy from the Italians. The church is a pretty church, and it was gaily decorated and brilliantly lit. To the left of the crimson altar stood a gilt and red velvet chair. It was waiting for the Bambino Gesù. The child Jesus was to sit on that chair, and be honoured that night.

An ancient custom, of which the origin is forgotten, but which is still religiously observed in Sorrento, decrees that on the night of the birth of

Christ, a real child, living and beautiful, shall be chosen as the representative of the divine child our eyes are not blessed in beholding, and that the faithful, like the shepherds of Bethlem, like the Eastern Kings, shall come and offer him gifts, and pay him homage.

We had not been seated long, when two side-doors opened — on one side, priests came out, on the other, a brown, good-looking woman, bearing a young child of three or so in her arms. He was a beautiful dark-eyed boy, clad royally in a cloak of scarlet wool. His mother placed him sitting on the red-velvet chair, and, removing the cloak, showed him in his little white shirt, bare-footed and bare-armed. A gilt basin and ewer, and a sponge, were handed to one of the priests. He took them, and, kneeling before the child, he washed the feet of this little heavenly ambassador. He next shod him with stockings and embroidered shoes. After this, the child was placed standing, a little silk frock of blue, with pink bows, made by his mother, and not in the least emulating the Hebrew costume, was thrown over him. Finally, the priest placed

on his head a crown of flowers. Each act was accompanied by prayers in Italian. No sooner was the child crowned, than shots were fired without, and the *Servi di Maria*, all rising, opened the *Te Deum*. The boy remained standing the whole time it was sung. His father supported him, and helped him to hold his little right arm, on which a bag of sweets had been hung, in the act of benediction, which the old painters give to the child Jesus. He behaved with great decorum, and only once showed some emotion. When the shoes were placed on his feet, he smiled, and turned his head of one side, looking at them with evident delight.

When the *Te Deum* was over, his mother took him in her arms, and carried him away. As she passed by us, her brown face beamed with happiness. Indeed, I never saw so much smiling in a church before. The priests, the *Servi di Maria*, the boys and men, who, with Italian familiarity, crowded around the altar, the ladies in the front seats, the contadine behind, were all one flow of smiles as they looked at the *Bambino*.

After his departure, the religious ceremonies proceeded. We had a sermon from a Canon, an address from the Archbishop, and Benediction. I heard, on the following day, more details concerning this pretty ceremony.

Formerly, the poorest child was chosen, and this was fit. A nun embroidered his habit, and kept him at her cost for a year; but now the nun is dead. The poor cannot bear the expense of the child's attire, and the rich and the comfortable have stepped in and taken possession of the post for their own children. The candidates must present themselves a year before the appointed time. Beauty is the greatest recommendation; next to beauty comes poverty. The poorest among the comfortable have the best chance. This year's Bambino Gesu is our neighbour. He is the son of a blacksmith, a little way off down the lanes; and his father has informed our servant Maria that it is a great consolation to him to have the divine child in his home. When this young king, whose name is Salvatore, left the house to proceed to the church, shots were fired, shots were fired when he came

back, shots were fired when he got up the next morning, shots were fired when he sat down to his Christmas dinner — in short, his happy father's pocket was fairly drained by gunpowder.

Well, it is a beautiful custom, worthy of a poetic people, whose thoughts must ever take a visible and poetic form. I felt, as I looked at that child, born to sorrow, sin, and death — I felt that it is good to be thus reminded of mysteries we treat so spiritually that we sometimes forget them. Do we, indeed, always remember that Christ became a weak little child for our sakes? We know it, but do we think much of it? Ay, truly I felt, as I looked on — as I saw the ardent faith of this simple people — ay, truly this is the flesh of Christ — this is the real humanity to which he became wedded, which he redeemed by his birth as well as by his blood.

The function over, we went to Gargiulo's, the falegname known to all the visitors of Sorrento for his elegant wood-work. He had very civilly asked if we should like to know from his household what takes place in most Sorrento families on Christmas

eve, and as this was a thing we greatly desired, we accepted willingly. Accordingly his son and two workmen came and fetched us, not for protection, for Sorrento is a safe place, but to light our path with lanterns — no useless precaution; lamps and gas are unknown here, and, unless when the moon shines, the streets are so many pits of darkness.

We were introduced into a large room, where the presepio had been made on boards raised about two feet above the ground. It was a stylish one, a large one too, but, first of all, what is a presepio? It is a representation of the birth of Christ. It is made of wood, of stumps of trees, of moss, of anything that will answer, and it represents rocks, rivers, trees, castles, houses, villas, palaces, anything that comes into the head of the contriver; provided that, in the centre, there be a spot which may be called the stable of Bethlem, and which will accomodate the Holy Family. Little baked clay figures, painted in strong colours, of shepherds bringing gifts, of animals, of peasant men and women, of pilgrims, kings, lords, and ladies,

of angels too, with wonderful wings, playing on fiddles, and hanging from wires, are indispensable for a presepio. It is to the Italian children what the Christmas tree is in Germany.

The little waxen image representing the holy child was not yet in the manger of Gargiulo's presepio. The youngest boy, Ferdinando, who was gaily dressed in blue, with a red scarf and white frill, and whose grave face never relaxed into a smile, went out for the purpose of carrying this image processionally in the streets, and bringing it to the presepio with due solemnity.

Vengono — vengono! cried his mother and sisters with great eagerness. They threw the windows open, and requested us to look out. We saw lights coming along the dark street, we heard deep male voices singing the *Te Deum*, and under a dais we saw the grave Ferdinando, solemnly carrying the Bambino.

The procession entered the house, the Bambino was brought in, laid in the manger by Ferdinando,

and the whole band began singing little Christmas hymns; next appeared Gargiulo's eldest son, a lad of fourteen, with priest's cap, cassock, and surplice. He ascended a temporary pulpit gaily decorated with tinsel, and on the text, "*parvulus natus est*," he delivered a flourishing sermon; the emphasis and gestures were perfect, and the self-possession complete. When he had done, the hymns began again, and wine and cakes, the gifts of the shepherds we were told, went round. The ease, the good breeding of these men, the absence of vulgarity in their manners and appearance, struck me very forcibly. I was seated by a Neapolitan lady, who had come to spend an hour with Gargiulo's family and presepio.

"I felt dull alone," she said, "and Gargiulo is a civil sort of man," she added, condescendingly.

It seems she had heard we were coming, and was most anxious to make our acquaintance.

"Neapolitans are such animals," she whispered, with a frown of disgust, "and foreigners are so amiable."

I ventured to suggest that all Neapolitans might not be so very animal as she thought, nor yet all foreigners so very amiable; but she squeezed my arm, and with an expressive look, reiterated her assertion, "sono bestie," for her unfortunate countrymen, and "così gentili" for the whole foreign brood.

We had another amateur of Gargiulo's festivities in the person of a tall Sorrento cavalier, who was a great deal more civilized than the Neapolitan lady. But well-bred conversation is not graphic, and he said nothing worth repeating.

The solemnity of the presepio being over, we left. The whole family, however, religiously spent the evening in eating and drinking. To go to bed on Christmas Eve is held unlucky. Accordingly, there was nothing in the street but carrying Bambini about, with tapers, and firing of petards, and singing of Te Deums, and nothing but eating sweets and drinking wine and liquors within doors. Fighting, quarrelling, drunkenness, are unknown in this happy country — it is all merry-making and devotion.

During Christmas time, the presepio of Dom Sabino is open to the public. We went to see it to-day. It fills a room; and the figures are ten inches high, at the very least.

Well, imagination is a fine thing, and Dom Sabino has got plenty of it. He is the author of all the fine presepii in and about Sorrento; and his terra-cotta figures have been purchased and carried away by enthusiastic foreigners, especially by Americans. They are, as I said, terra-cotta — the faces and hands are very carefully painted, and the clothes are not shabby, baked clay, but real clothes of silk and velvet; and this especially excites the admiration, as well it may, of all Sorrento.

But, indeed, this presepio is very pretty, and what is there not in it? Fair princesses, covered with pearls; wealthy peasant women, in national costume; one old lady, grim and brown, is riding on a horse; shepherds making cheeses; naked beggars, clad in patches, and screaming out their misery to his eccellenza, one or the kings riding by; a shepherd playing on his pipes, and rivalling

the melody of the angels above; betides dogs, cats, rabbits, the ox, the ass, and the star — large and brilliant as a planet — are all there, every one of them.

The holy family is not very visible; but I thought that the fair face of the Madonna looked very sweet. Saint Joseph was venerable; and the kneeling king, who humbly worshipped the divine child, struck me with his royal look.

The details, the episodes of this little drama are not amongst its least interesting features. Dom Sabino is a poet and a philosopher. On the ruins of a Roman temple he has raised a poor, modern shop, filled with all sorts of eatables. He has a turn for the popular, too. A fiddler playing on a loggia, a group of itinerant musicians, are all excellent in their way. But, oh! ye Moorish slaves, bending beneath the weight of that velvet chest, with its silver clasps! — ye knights and pages of the crescent — was there a crescent then? — with your prancing horses housed in richest velvet! — ye pious kings and wise men of the East, who shall recount your glories? — who but that conta-

dina on the rocks that overlooks the path! Her outspread hands and open mouth express her admiration, and, in their turn, excite that of a real, living contadina by me. With Italian familiarity, she laid her hand on my shoulder, and, pointing with the other hand to the little clay figure, she chuckled with admiration and glee.

Dom Sabino himself — a dignified-looking gentleman, though not enthusiastic — was not his own coldest admirer. He heard our praise modestly; but when we forgot the expression of that face, or the turn of this figure, he gently drew our attention, and let us miss nothing.

TENTH CHAPTER.

Naples.

WE left Sorrento in the promise of all its beauty. "A little more," said Carmela, "the orange-trees will be in blossom, and the blackbirds will all be singing." Yet we persisted in going. We thought it more prudent to fly from the siren before she began her song, than to wait and find it not impossible, indeed, but too hard to leave her.

What Sorrento is in April, I cannot say. I never saw anything more beautiful than Sorrento in February. Long walks in the narrow and sheltered roads that make Sorrento so pleasant for pedestrian excursions in summer, are, in winter, neither pleasing nor advisable; but the views are ever lovely. Never have eyes enjoyed a more delightful prospect than that which spread below our drawing-room windows, or which our loggia commanded.

Summer softness had returned to the sky, and summer tints to the placid sea. Morning vapours veiled the snowy ridge of the distant mountains of Puglia. They seemed enchanted between sea and sky — so soft, so misty, so aerial, so distinct. It was not hard, in looking at them, to understand whence Turner had got his magic light — it is Italian. Here, too, he found his burning skies and those sunsets of flame which may seem incredible in England, and which here seem never to cease.

The road from Sorrento to Castellamare winds at the foot of the mountains above the sea. It abounds in fine and picturesque views; the richness of the verdure and the variety of the wild flowers, render it extremely beautiful in spring. A railroad, and a very slow one it is, joins Castellamare and Naples; but we were too late, or, rather, we were too early for the train; we left the carriage we had engaged to Castellamare, and took another on to Naples by the carriage road. That old road, spite the dust, has its attractions. It gives you a glimpse of Italian life and ways, which you could

never have from a railroad carriage. The woman winding silk on her threshold, the dirty children, the everlasting barber's shop, with the copper basin dangling at the door, and the meek man within, holding out his lathered face to the razor, the rows of poor at the church gate, the trellised walk that looks above the garden wall, the vast and arched loggia, so pleasant and so cool in summer, the dilapidated mansion, the tall, gaunt gate that stands ever open and guards a barren wilderness of stunted trees, yellow grass, and low bush — is it a magic gate like that in the Arabian tale, and is there some invisible palace and garden of delights behind? — the white and elegant villa, the luxurious palace of the noble, with its vista of a paved court and blooming garden, follow each other, and leave pictures on the mind, mere vignettes, if you will, but in their way very charming.

We had a coachman who boasted that, "since he was that high, he had been with foreigners," and who, unsolicited, but not unwelcome, now and then turned round his good-humoured face towards us, and acted the cicerone.

"That, signora," said he, pointing with his whip to a strange green car, on which blazed a gold face like the sun at noonday, and which stood empty at the gate of a baked clay-looking church, "that is the car in which the dead are conveyed to the Campo Santo. It has come all the way from Naples. You may notice the four corners outside; in each of these corners sits one of the boys the signora may see now sitting at the door of the church."

And so they were; four boys in blue, with white capes, and strange caps and all four sitting in a row, and eating heartily. I forgot to ask whether they were meant for angels.

"I like," pursued our coachman, "to give information to travellers who talk well, like the signora, and who can understand me."

We thanked him for his condescension, and continued to receive knowledge.

All along our route we had noticed a singular black doll suspended from various windows. One had an orange tied to its feet, another, hanging across the road, wore a crown of feathers.

"That," said our coachman, "is a sign intimating that the people observe Lent in all its severity, without availing themselves of the dispensations of the Church. They fast every day, excepting Sunday, and they do not taste meat, milk, eggs, cheese, butter, or lard, from Ash Wednesday until Easter. The feathers are seven, and every week one is pulled out. Formerly everyone observed Lent in that fashion. Now!" he shook his head expressively, and, indeed, the dolls were more remarkable than numerous.

In Sorrento, too, Lent is observed in all its rigour, but the people are more modest about it; they hang up no dolls to say to their neighbours: "see how pious I am!"

Indeed, to fast and to abstain from meat are so much a matter of course with this sober people, that a foreigner might live years amongst them and never suspect from their altered appearance, or learn from their discourse, the severity of their abstinence. I never heard but one remark on the subject, and I had led to it by mentioning it first. It was from Donna Anunziata.

"Ah! how nice meat smells on Easter Sunday," she said, with a sparkle in her blue eyes.

Few cities have such noble and elegant suburbs as Naples enjoys in Portici. It is a royal residence, but so dangerous from the vicinity of Vesuvius, that it is seldom occupied by the Neapolitan sovereigns. We caught a glimpse of its beautiful gardens as we passed through the palace, which the road crosses.

Charles the Third has left, in this one circumstance, another proof of that honourable rectitude which characterised him as a sovereign. He would not allow the road to be turned aside from his palace, but rather suffered carriages to cross it to and fro than interfere, howsoever slightly, with public convenience.

This road is a very fine one, and the villas that line it are both handsome and substantial. They inspire one with a profound contempt for English villas, with their sounding titles and walls of thin baked clay. Is it stone that is wanting in England, or is the richest of modern nations so chary of her gold that she will not build? There was

no stone in sea-girt Venice, but there was money and the will to spend it; and the merchant princes of the Adriatic have left us elegant palaces, beautiful even in their decay, and churches of marble that defy the power of time.

The fashion after which a nation builds is not a matter of indifference. The Italian character is full of faults, many of which verge so much on meanness, and they cannot all be modern faults, that the most impartial traveller must now and then be tempted to denounce the whole nation. But, granting all that can be said against the Italians, they have one redeeming point that will always have its weight with a just and reflective mind, they know how to build; and men, who can build so nobly and so solidly, must have in them no common share of power and greatness — for greatness ever seeks the imperishable. It cannot attain it, and it knows it, yet it does well to seek it, for all that.

We were waylaid at the gates of Naples by the Custom-House dragons, and we got free by the usual spell — the *bottiglia*. The bottle is a won-

derful thing in Italy, as wonderful as ever was Aladdin's lamp in the celestial empire. Many are the feats you can accomplish with its help. You can enter private houses and royal palaces, you can smuggle forbidden books, cards, cigars, anything, in short, into this most jealous of kingdoms, and all for a sum varying from one carlino, fourpence, to as many piastres as you choose to give, or as the occasion requires. In every country the bottle acts its part, and is recognised as an important element in the social system, but in no country is the bottle so frank and so open as in the kingdom of Naples. The Gabelliere came up to us with the usual inquiry. We answered, and with perfect truth, that our luggage held no contrabands or anything subject to the dazi indiretti.

"Still, it is necessary to open and examine that trunk," he said.

We gravely entreated him not to do so, knowing, all the time, that nothing was further from the worthy Gabelliere's intent than to unstrap our trunk in the middle of the road, and trouble himself with looking over its contents.

"We shall take your word," he royally and magnanimously said, "but we must have a bottiglia."

We gave our bottiglia, and drove on.

"They do not do those dirty things in your country," said our philosophic coachman. "But, poor fellows, it is not their fault; they are not well paid, and they must live."

Whether the Gabellieri are well paid or not is a question I cannot decide. I know they all ask and take money. They have, however, a sort of form and of pride, too, about it. Three years ago we travelled by the stage-coach from Rome to Naples. We alighted at Itri to submit to the Custom-House visit. Our luggage was taken down, the trunks were opened and shut again, then we were politely asked to walk upstairs. We were tired and heavy; it was early morning. I remember the dirty, wooden staircase up which we climbed to a dingy-looking room, where two well-dressed officials waited, with some dignity, behind a table. Our conductor pointed to a wooden dish, with a fair sprinkling of silver pieces.

"The signori have made their offering," he said, emphatically.

The two officials said nothing; I do not think they looked at us; they went on with a little bit of local gossip, and treated us with superb indifference. We added our share to the silver pieces, and walked down-stairs. They had not even condescended to come for their money; no, we were sent up to them as subjects to their sovereigns, we paid our money as regularly as a tax, and their majesties pocketed it with royal coolness.

In the course of the same day we arrived at Molo di Gaeta, and there, to our surprise, the conductor informed us that there was another Custom House, and that, if we wished to avoid being delayed two hours, we must pay tribute. People get ill-tempered travelling. We did not refuse to pay, which would have been a perilous, imprudent course, but we gave so stingily that the gentlemen of Molo di Gaeta, disgusted with the meanness of our collective bottles, returned them indignantly; but, at the same time, and not to offend their friend, the conductor, they kindly let our luggage

pass unexamined. We all bore the insulting refusal and took back our money with Christian humility. A third appeal was made to our pockets at the gates of Naples; but this time an exasperated lady declared that, do what they would, *she* would not pay; threats, coaxing, entreaties, having proved unavailing, we were allowed to pass still unexamined; for if travellers hate to have their luggage visited, they may be sure that the lazy Neapolitan Gabelliere hates the whole affair as much as they do.

Happy they who see a beautiful place on a fine day; no first disagreeable impression will mar their remembrance of its beauty.

We entered Naples for the fourth time, and found it rainy and dirty, as we had found it three times before. Worse, the hotels were full; and lodgings were hard to get. At length we were housed, and to our satisfaction, for it poured the remainder of that day and the whole of the next.

Instead of the orange-groves of Sorrento, I saw the next morning a dirty piazza, and observed Neapolitan manners. A lady in violet silk, flounced

to the waist, was lounging at the opposite window, whilst her servant made the bed. Dirty women, with shawls on their heads, went up the church steps. The seller of lemons and oranges was dressing his wooden stall, or rather house, for there is a roof to it, with garlands and festoons of fruit. The shoemaker sat at his door, as much out as the rain would let him, working zealously; a dirty boy had just brought him his cup of chocolate from the neighbouring coffee-house; cows and their calves were walking under the high archways of houses to give their milk; troops of goats were darting down a narrow street, and from every lane and alley vendors were screaming at the pitch of their voice, with a noise unknown out of that noisy city.

We had barely done breakfast when we received a visit. The custode of the Egyptian gallery wanted to see us. We had an alarming vision of Egyptian antiquities, but curiosity proved stronger than fear, and the custode entered. He was a little spare man, with a strange twist in his face and a troubled eye. He brought us copies of Cor-

reggio and Titian, from fifteen to twenty shillings a-piece.

"And to show you," he began, without giving us time to object, "that I am really the author of these copies. Look!"

He seized a pencil, and rapidly and correctly traced the outline of the Madonna del Coniglio. We praised his skill, his moderate prices, &c., but declined purchasing.

"I could leave them cheaper," said the custode, scratching his head, and giving us a meditative look of his troubled eye.

Still we declined. Then he lured us into a discourse upon art; and no sooner had a few imprudent words escaped us, than he turned up his eyes, clasped his hands, and tapped his foot, exclaiming:

"It really is delightful to talk with ladies who understand the arts so well! Will you not have the Madonna del Coniglio for three piastres?"

We assured him it was impossible; and with a sigh, the poor fellow, having exhausted persuasion,

cheapness, and flattery, packed up his pictures, and took his leave.

We saw him the same day at the Studij, but he ignored us completely. The picture-dealer and the keeper of the Egyptian gallery were two distinct individuals.

ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Studij.

THE magnificent collection enclosed within the walls of the Studij is unique in the world. Its pictures, its statues can be surpassed — the greatest masterpieces of modern art have other homes; but a few faded paintings, taken from the walls of two buried cities, the kitchen wares, the half-burnt food, the jewels, the pots and pans of the Pompeii and Herculaneum citizens of the year 79 of our era, are more potent over the imagination of man than all the marvels of the Sixtine, or the treasures of the Vatican.

The ancients have come down very cold to us through two thousand years. Their very faith is a dead letter to us. We may wander through the land they covered with temples and altars without one reverent thought in which they have a part. The ruined temple speaks feebly of the worship it has survived. We admire the marble

of the broken column, and think little or nothing of the God once adored within the mysterious sanctuary. The freshness of the falling waters, the verdure of the delicate fern, are all we care for in the grotto once sacred to the Naiad. The pious thought that placed a holy presence in this solitary spot — the tender awe with which the gracious divinity of the place was worshipped by generations of bygone women and men — move us not. Nay, we have even learned to despise the faith, to them so sacred and so dear. It is associated in our minds with the puerile revival of the last ages. Mythology and all its gods are wearisome to us as a twice-told tale, foolish as Damon and Phyllis in the pastoral. But that is not all. Modern customs and manners are the development of the customs and manners of our ancestors. They are perpetual links between the past and the present. The vices and the virtues of generations gone have survived them to a considerable degree. They have left to their descendants traditions, hatreds, passions, and duties, which time has not effaced, and has scarcely

softened. But the barbarians, who violated the peace and the splendour of the ancient world, also broke its link with the present. What have we in common with the Greeks and more modern Romans? What do we know about them? Their political history, their wars, their conquests, their roads, and their ruins; this much, or little more.

From their literature, we have gathered a few facts. The camp or the forum was the real life of man; the destiny of woman is well expressed by the old epitaph, "She stayed at home, and spun wool." Learned and accomplished ladies were rarely virtuous; the sanguinary games of the circus and gifts of land and corn were sufficient to the people. Republican consuls, tyrants, emperors, servile senators, illustrious generals, polished poets, stately historians, orators, statesmen, and, beneath these, a swarming population of parasites, freed men, captives, and slaves, are what we know of the past. No wonder that it seems tedious and cold, that we weary of Rome's greatness, and care not much for her records. But enter the Studiŭ, and that indifference vanishes.

The two first rooms open to visitors are amongst the most interesting. They contain the paintings, inscriptions, and mosaics which have been cut out of the walls of Pompeii and Herculaneum; and faded, effaced, and decayed as these paintings are, they are yet very striking.

Masterpieces they never were; we must not expect to see in them those triumphs of ancient art which live in the names of Zeuxis and Apelles; they are mere house decorations, no higher in rank than the paintings which adorn our theatres or a French café. But it is interesting to see all that is left of this perishable branch of ancient art, and to know what were the house decorations of a second-rate Roman town, eighteen hundred years ago.

Our mediæval ancestors had tapestries worked in the frame by noble ladies, or wrought in the loom by Flemish artisans; the leather hangings of Cordova have remained famous, and, however handsome, or not, these may have been, there is no doubt that they were lasting and substantial. An elegant Pompeian, half Greek, half Roman, might have criticized the figures drawn by Gothic ladies;

he might have objected to Spanish leather as heavy and coarse; but he could have despised neither, for either represented a sort of skill, much time, and some money. But what would, what could the Pompeian say to the paper hangings of the nineteenth century? Flimsy in substance, poor in value, poor in taste. Fine silk, velvet, and gilding adorn the palaces of kings and the mansions of the great; but they are the exceptions, not the rule, and they are in luxury beyond anything in ancient Pompeii. Taking it for granted, therefore, that the Pompeian would only visit middle-class houses, we can imagine with what feelings he would turn back from our cold-white, pale-grey, or uniform crimson and green walls to his panellings with fountains, flowers, landscapes, farms, nymphs, gods, and goddesses, airy dancers, or wild Bacchante — not to speak of the grand religious or historical paintings, which were rather pictures — and proclaim loudly the superiority of Pompeian ways and habits.

The size of these mural paintings varies according to the places they decorated; the smallest are amongst the best; and the best too, generally, are

the lightest in subject. For once we see the grave Romans in that careless mood which they never wear in history. As mere paintings, it must be confessed that they are not beautiful. They look like frescoes — though they are not — and they have the coldness and the want of depth of wall painting. The colouring has been injured by time, and by the ashes of Vesuvius, and were it not for the varnish that is put over them when they are dug out, it would vanish altogether. The flesh of the figures has become of a dull brick red, and the strong hatches, which the ancient artists used, give, to our eyes, accustomed to the graduated tints and the melting colours of modern painters, a sense of harshness and coarseness; but if we overlook this, or get over the first unpleasant impression, we are struck with the correct drawing, with the fine expressive heads, the graceful and elegant attitudes, and the charming details that meet us everywhere.

These paintings are religious, historical, allegorical, domestic, or purely decorative. The ornamentation of the latter; the fountains, arcades,

glimpses of landscape, vases, from which spring graceful lines; the wreaths of flowers and leaves, with strange, half-human figures, the decorative style in short, which prevails largely to this day, which came in at the Renaissance, and of which the loggie in the Vatican afford the finest modern models, these strike us at once as familiar and known. Indeed, it is difficult, on seeing them, not to believe in the tradition which is related to all the visitors of the baths of Titus, in Rome. These baths were discovered and dug up in the sixteenth century, and when we saw them we were told that Raffaele crept through a hole, which still exist, near the ceiling of one of the halls, in order to study the graceful ornaments with which the Roman artist had decorated the walls of the Imperial palace; thence, it is added, Raffaele borrowed the idea of the style he adopted in the famous loggie.

Some of the historical paintings are very fine. Medea meditating the murder of her children, who are playing carelessly, is tragic. The sacrifice of Iphigenia is very interesting; it is supposed to be a copy of the famous picture by Timanthes; here,

as in the work of the Grecian artist, Agamemnon has veiled his averted head. The father of Iphigenia could not look on the sacrifice of his daughter, and the painter could not attempt to portray the anguish of the father. Beneath that painting there was a modern copy in oil colours, exposed for sale. It was exactly like the original in size and drawing. The vivid colouring of the one, and the faded hues of the other, made the only difference between the fresh and the old painting; but it was striking. At once we saw, in looking at what the Pompeian picture was like in its early days, the abyss that divides ancient from modern art.

Right or wrong, we have taken it for granted that colours are to be subdued, and that light is to be shaded away as much as possible; and, right or wrong, the ancients seem to have held that red must be painted red, and that every object and figure was to be placed in clear, distinct light. There never could have been a Greek Rembrandt. The Greek painter — for these artists are chiefly Greek — held, indeed, that gloom was useful, and he used it freely, but not in the modern fashion.

He did not paint his figure receiving a ray of light, that seems strong because all other light is subdued around it, sitting, like Rembrandt's "Alchemist," by a high and solitary window in a vast and gloomy room, with vistas of massive staircases, winding up in darkness, the whole leaving an impression of something shadowy, strange, and half unreal. He did the very reverse. On a pure black ground, he drew a wild Bacchante furiously riding a centaur, yet, graceful in her madness; he portrayed, in brilliant colours, a troop of dancing-girls, gay, bright, vivid as the hours that attend the car of the sun-god; and so far from producing something mysterious, he created fantastic figures, strange, it is true, but thrown out and not absorbed by darkness, and most clearly and positively defined.

More attractive than the sacrifice of Iphigenia is the parting of Briseis and Achilles. The head of the Greek hero is scornful and splendid; still finer is that of the reluctant captive. In her glowing beauty, we see the ancient ideal of woman's loveliness. Full, handsome, voluptuous, Briseis is born to be a captive or a queen. She is made and

meant for man's pleasure and admiration — respect, tenderness, love, she never can command; but apart the heathen feeling in which it is conceived, this handsome face is Italian to this day. Exactly like it, in cast and feature, was the head of the Sorrento girls, whom we saw last autumn carrying mortar for the mansons.

The smaller the pictures are, the more charming they also seem to be. Few of the visitors of the Studij will forget the servant-girl stealing a look at the letter which her mistress is reading, the young girl dressing, and the exquisite little picture called "*Le Marché des Amours*." Two maidens are buying loves from a lady who deals in them. She has got three to sell, but the purchasers cannot make up their mind. A little love, who stands by the knee of one of the hesitating girls, does his best to be bought; another, whom the *marchande d'amours* holds up for their inspection by the wings, with no more ceremony than if he were a chicken, stretches out his little arms with pathetic entreaty. A third, seen through the bars of his cage, waits patiently, and still the two girls are perplexed, and know not which to take.

The same graceful fancy is displayed in the numerous pictures of loves, who seem to act parts we have often assigned to our domestic elfs. Some play at hide and seek, some sit and make shoes, some dye wool, some ride dolphins, some ply a fishing-rod, and some do the house-work like any brownie. The paintings of animals and fruit are also exquisite. Two quails pecking, one an ear of wheat, the other some millet, are vividly true. Some satirical pictures, one of which represents a cigala (Nero) driving a car, drawn by a parrot (Seneca), are curious. They help to show us in what light the grotesque was held by a people whom we have learned to consider as painfully solemn. Whether even the sight of these light and satirical paintings will alter much the original impression is another thing. I once heard a learned German attempting to prove to a lady that the ancient Egyptians were a bright and cheerful people. He brought proof upon proof, but she heard him, and was not convinced. Mummies and pyramids were stronger than all his arguments.

Isis had a temple in Pompeii, and a small col-

lection of Egyptian antiquities is kept in the Studij, under the care of our friend the custode. We did not enter that gallery, being too eager after Greek and Roman records to care about anything that came from the banks of the Nile.

The collection of ancient statues in the Studij is magnificent; but it must be seen. Only professional critics, who have the right to talk learnedly, can describe the ideal head of the Psyche — all plaster casts are vile libels of it — the Torso of the Bacchus, the calm, thoughtful dignity of the Aristides. But splendid as are these fragments and specimens of ancient art, they divide attention with the interesting portraits which abound here, as well as in all other Italian collections.

An attraction, beyond that of mere beauty or art, makes us pause before the bust of Cleopatra, so voluptuously handsome, yet so small, so delicate, so womanly. The Aspasia in the Vatican has a more intellectual head than the Egyptian queen; but in both there is the same soft seduction, the grace stronger than beauty, which enslaved every heart.

The head of Alexander is also very striking. It has not so much character as the busts in the Uffizii or in the Capitol, but, like them, it expresses, in the ardent look, in the parted lips, the very eagerness of desire. An unsatisfied longing — very rare in the calm antique heads — a passion for wider worlds to conquer, breathes through the coldness of marble, after two thousand years. Interesting, too, though on very different grounds, are the heads of Nero and his mother. How like — how perfidious both! — how cruel! but the head of the son is low — the head of a gladiator, with nothing to redeem it. The grace of a woman, the dignity of an empress, mark that of the mother. More iniquitous still is the head of Tiberius; indeed, few of these Roman Emperors can be looked at without repulsion and disgust. The cruelty, the licentiousness, that disgraced their reigns, have been immortalized in their effigies. From these low heads of degraded tyrants, it is a relief to turn to the intellectual countenances of the sages and philosophers of Greece and Rome. Moral greatness is not always there; but thought,

seeming gravity, are rarely absent. Mingled with these statues and busts of remarkable or eminent persons, there is an interesting family episode, which few visitors will be tempted to overlook. I allude to the portraits of the seven Balbi.

Some time before Herculaneum was destroyed, in the early part of our era, Marcus Nonius Balbus was pretor and pro-consul of the city. He had a son who held the same office, his mother, Viceria Archas, and five goodly daughters. Statues were erected to this distinguished family; and when Herculaneum was discovered in the seventeenth century, the effigies of Balbus, of his mother, and his five daughters, were found in the Basilica. Two equestrian statues of Balbus and his son were also found under the exterior arches of the Chalcidica; and all these statues, with the exception of one of the daughters, which was given by the Prince of Elbœuf to Eugene of Savoy, and which is now in the Dresden Museum, are assembled in the Studiij — a little domestic history.

Viceria Archas was a stately matron. Roman dignity is impressed in her bearing; her head is

fine, expressive, full of intellect and power. Her son is very like her; but he has a look of care, borrowed perhaps from public life, from which his mother is free. The younger Balbus is very juvenile to be a consul and a pretor; but a family favour can do much — and the Balbi are a strong family, or the five grand-daughters of Viceria Archas would not have had a place in the Basilica. The four whom we see here are tall, elegant girls, and they wear the tunic and the pallium with much grace. They are very like each other, and rather pretty than handsome. Their faces, though Italian to this day, are not so in the sense of Italian beauty. They are not like their father or the majestic Viceria Archas. The image of their mother is not here — she probably died in their youth; but from her they must have derived those soft, small, fair faces — such faces as we meet every day in Naples, with slight features, rounded contours, and golden hair, verging on red. Their undulating tresses still keep traces of the gilding, which was meant to show that they were fair; and their hair is dressed in a fashion which prevailed a few years

ago — parted in bands, made wavy by the crimping-irons, and gathered behind. What their Dresden sister is like, I cannot tell. It is a pity that she should be divided from her kindred. These statues, seen as a family, have a touching interest, apart from their value as pieces of sculpture. Divided and isolated, they become mere statues, and can claim but cold criticism. The equestrian statues of Balbus and his son are said to be very fine, and draw forth the admiration of all connoisseurs, and the enthusiasm of every guide-book.

The bronzes of the Studij are the finest known. They come chiefly from Herculaneum and Pompeii, and they make us ask, if the bronzes of two small provincial cities were so perfect, what must have been the bronzes of the Imperial City? — for, alas! the masterpieces of ancient art, carried away as spoils of Rome by the Eastern emperors, became the prey of Moslem invaders, and were melted down for the sake of the metal. The thought, the genius of man were held as of little worth, when compared with the ore that enshrined it.

There is great pleasure in visiting that narrow gallery, lined on either side with fine figures; here objects are not so numerous as to weary attention; we may look and come back, nor feel urged to go on, because there is yet so much to be seen. All these bronzes are fine, but a drunken Faun, sinking back, with languid, half-shut eyes, with hand heavily raised to snap his fingers at thought and care, is a masterpiece. Very fine, too, is the wearied Mercury, farther on. His handsome, astute face expresses more fatigue than thought; his bent back is rounded into rest; his half-raised foot is sore with a long journey; for once the God has not used his wings; he has travelled like a man, and like a man, he is weary. Two more Fauns, one sleeping fast, and a diminutive little figure dancing, are charming; a small equestrian Amazon, casting a dart, an energetic, expressive figure, is now acknowledged to be the original of the Amazon which drew so much attention in the Crystal Palace in '51. It vexed me to see it. It seems we cannot have a statue of our own.

Some of the finest statues in the studio were

found in the Termini of Caracalla, near Rome. Such as the group of the Toro Farnese, which must be left to connoisseurs; the Hercules, which Michel Angelo called divine — he had repaired it; but when the wanting pieces were found, he broke up what he had done, saying, it did not become mortals to touch the handiwork of gods — and which can only be divine to critics learned in anatomy; these, besides many other fine relics of antiquity and of the middle ages, were the property of the Farnese family, and through them passed into the branch of the Bourbons now possessed of the throne of Naples. But the Farnese also had pictures; the best have found a fitting place and fitting company; the worst have been thrust into dark, sepulchral-looking rooms, which we saw from a distance, and which a ghost-like keeper, beckoning in the half gloom, lured us to enter. We gave a look at the walls and wanted to retreat, but the custode, who seldom had the good fortune to catch any stray flies — he was there like a spider in his web — and who saw, with envy in his heart and jealousy of spirit, the

shower of silver carlini that fell to the lot of his more fortunate brethren, literally would not let us go. He took me by the arm, and he held me fast; he seized a chair, he insisted on making me ascend it in order to see a humble picture of a Farnese battle long ago forgotten; and I had to defend my liberty with strong speech and flat denials.

"But the Farnese collection, signora," he said, making another attempt. "Look, pray look!"

I declared, half-angrily, that nothing should make me look at one of the Farnese pictures; he yielded; with sullen despair he let us go; with gloomy looks he saw us leave and ascend to the bright, cheerful galleries up-stairs, past that wonderful statue of King Ferdinand, by Canova. His Majesty chose to be represented as a colossal Minerva. Poor Minerva, what had she done to be so libelled!

We went at once to the piccoli bronzi. The hospitable SALVE, in mosaic, met us on the threshold of the first room. In glass cases around the walls, we saw the objects of our search; the whole

domestic history of the buried cities was told there by a multitude of mute, but expressive witnesses.

We began by a charming little stove, placed in the centre of the room, on an antique table. It is a square fortress, with towers and battlements. The centre of the citadel is the place of strength; here the fire was lit that roasted the joint spitted across the battlements, and that warmed the water flowing in the secret pipe to each of the towers; the said towers being provided with lids, so that the cook may see when the water boils, and with cocks for him to draw it off at his pleasure.

It is impossible to find a neater contrivance. In the glass cases, we saw frying-pans like our own, trivets, tongs, weights, pastry-moulds, representing animals — all simple, but of excellent workmanship. The other rooms are more artistic. Here we see the wonderful lamps and candelabra, to which no description can do justice — so perfect, so elegant, so finished, even when they are of the plainest kind. A bath, a triclinium, curule chairs, household gods, charming statues, fine vases,

some inlaid with silver, besides an innumerable quantity of vases and sacred objects used in the worship of the gods. To these succeed arms, bucklers, casques — in one, the skull of the poor fellow on duty at the time of the eruption, still looks grimly at the beholder — inscriptions, bells, cars; and another stove used to cook or heat food by means of hot water, in the fashion which all French cookery-books have denominated “*bain-marie*.” This clever stove stands on an ancient table in the middle of the room, but the glass-cases around are even more interesting. They really contain everything: surgical instruments similar to those still in use; ivory markers used in the theatres, and on which the title of the play, the name of the author, and the number of the seat, were inscribed; dice for gamblers — some, it is sad to say, are loaded — there is nothing new under the sun; fishing-hooks, a reed cut like a pen, inkstands, seals, bells for cattle, metallic mirrors for ladies, little vases for perfume, and a glass one with rouge, besides a thimble, needles, reels, and a whole world of odds and ends, which

there is no describing without writing volumes — which it is delightful to have seen, and almost as delightful to talk about.

The rooms that follow are devoted to those red and black vases of baked clay popularly called Etruscan, and of which the Studij possesses the largest collection known, though there are some fine ones in every national gallery, and a very fair number in the British Museum. Learning alone can do justice to these frail but beautiful relics of a bygone civilisation. Other nations have left us the broken columns of their temples, the gigantic monuments which the dust of the desert has not invaded, which the sea has not swept away, and the flood could not undermine, to transmit to us the memory of their greatness. Etrusca has left us her sepulchres, and with the dust of her dead a few exquisite jewels, and vases numberless and perfect, admirable tokens of the taste and skill of a forgotten race.

But, as I said before, it requires learning to talk well of these delicate and finished relics. Mere ignorant observers, who go through the

rooms, can only appreciate in a general cursory fashion, the beauty of form, the fine contrast of colour, the purity of line, which distinguish these vases — each is, moreover, a history in itself of ancient traditions, customs, and mythology. One large vase, recently discovered, had no less than one hundred and fifty eight figures painted on its rounded surface, in that clear, keen, outline style which characterises these vases. It represented the struggle of the Amazons and their queen Penthesilea against Achilles and the Greeks, and it took up four octavo pages of the catalogue.

The smaller vases for perfumes, the flat cup with its graceful Greek border or central figure, are not, at least, so large as to weary attention. There is one of a graceful girl sitting alone, and playing on the lyre, with a Greek inscription recording her beauty, which is very charming. Another of a handsome woman dismissing an old servant on an errand, and enjoining secrecy, which recalls, in its mingled slyness and grace, the pictures from Pompeii and Herculaneum below.

But these rooms in which the Etruscan vases

have found a home, do not yet hold the most interesting objects, or the greatest treasures, of this place, which its contents render more magnificent than a palace. Back through the *piccoli bronzi* we went to the narrow but wonderful room that holds the *oggetti preziosi* — precious, indeed, in every sense.

The *cave canem* mosaic, taken from the house of the dramatic poet in Pompeii, keeps watch, like any dragon of old, over these treasures. They consist of the finest of cameos, of exquisite jewels found in sepulchres, and of the half-burnt food and colours discovered in the buried cities. And to these frail memorials of the past at once rush all visitors.

The finest cameo, the celebrated *Tazza Farnese* itself must give way before them. For here we see figs, dried raisins, beans, wheat, barley, hemp, a loaf of bread, eggs — real eggs, ancient oil, in a real Pompeian bottle, paste in a cloth, olives, the fruit of the Caroub-tree, nuts, almonds, soap, ropes, corks, sponges, pitch, an inkstand with dried ink, colours used by the decorative painters of Pompeii,

azure, ochre, nimum, yellow, black and green in their vases, with the implements to apply these colours once used by the hand that has so long been dust. Besides these interesting relics, we have here a very fair collection of plate; of pastry-moulds, such as we use, spoons, handsome dishes, embossed cups, one wreathed with vine and ivy leaves; all of which were once the pride of some Pompeian sideboard.

In another of the glass cases there is a whole collection of gold ornaments, some found in the house of Diomedes in Pompeii, and which the custode calls the tesoro of Giulia, Moglie di Diomede. I should have liked to ask him how he knew that her name was Giulia, and that she was the wife of Diomedes; but he was busy with a large English family of fair-haired young ladies, and not to be interrupted. The tesoro was worthy of Bulwer's heroine, and it has been placed in worthy company; necklaces, bracelets, brooches, found in ancient tombs, and which have survived the human dust with which they were buried.

All these ornaments are exquisite, and inspire,

by their elegant simplicity, a great pity, I will not say contempt, for it is not the word, for the forced grace of modern jewellery. The earrings are fanciful enough; a pair of scales was a favourite pattern; a triangle too, and graceful crescents found favour; serpents prevail amongst the bracelets, as they do to this day; and the same necklaces of gold-balls strung like pearls, which the wealthy peasant women of the kingdom still wear, are here as they were worn by Roman ladies. The rings, pins, chains, I will not describe, they differ but little from our own.

This room of precious objects contains seventeen hundred and eighty cameos, according to the catalogue, and the finest and largest, the celebrated Tazza Farnese, would take pages to describe properly, if it were possible to do so, which seems out of the question until the erudite have agreed what it is about. It is a magnificent cup of oriental sardonyx, clear, mellow, transparent; exquisite as a mere stone, and marvellous, indeed, as a work of art. This much the ignorant can see; but what its pure and delicate eight figures represent, an Egyp-

tian Myth, treated by a Greek artist; an apotheosis, the entrance of Adrian in Alexandria, one of the Ptolomies, &c., is more than the learned themselves can say. I believe there are almost as many opinions on the subject as about the famous mosaic, which was discovered in Pompeii, and is now in the statue gallery below. It represents a battle, as anyone can see, and a battle-field it has proved to the Italian dottedi; no less than ten different interpretations have been offered, and it can be proved of every one, that it is not the right one!

The library was closed, and the rooms devoted to the Papyrii were very interesting, it is true, but not very intelligible; these little carbonized rolls, like pieces of coal, that have to be unfolded by miracles of skill, patience and dexterity, hold, perhaps, some of the lost treasures of antiquity, but long lifetimes shall have to be given before we know it; there is no making haste with such brittle treasures, posterity will know whether they were worth the toil they cost. We never shall, and may pass on to the pictures.

There are finer paintings in other Italian gal-

leries than in the Studij; the rooms too, have a poor, cold, damp, dingy look, that is depressing; the finest paintings look the better for brilliant light and a cheerful home. The masterpieces are collected together in the farthest rooms; here we see two or three wonderful pictures, wonderful amongst the good. One is a portrait of a Cardinal, by Raffaele; it is a struggle between the austerity of the original, and the suave grace of the painter; another portrait by Titian, of Philip the second of Spain, is fine, but painful. A sad and sallow youth, with an unhappy look, like one predestined to his own woe as much as to that of others, clad in pale satin garments, looks at you sullenly from the canvas, and whether you like it or not, makes you look long at him. High up, and raised aloft on account of their size, are two large paintings, copied by Annibal Caracci from the frescoes of Corregio in the church of Saint John of Parma. The originals have ceased to exist, but the copies have been preserved carefully; they have been allotted a place amongst the masterpieces of the greatest geniuses, and they are enough to make us

marvel at the lost originals. One of these paintings represents the crowning of the virgin by her divine son in heaven. It breathes majesty and grace, with that inspiration, that glow from within which the celestial figures of Correggio always have; other painters carry earth and humanity into the kingdom of God, but the saints of Correggio are all transfigured; they have been on mount Thabor; his angels were born in heaven, and have breathed divine air.

Two small, but very beautiful, pictures of this fine painter — the mystic marriage of Saint Catherine and the Madonna del Corriglio — drew us amongst the ranks of the young and old painters, busy copying. At once, a young man, with a foolish face and weak eyes, seized me. I wanted to look at Correggio, but he insisted on making me look at *his* version of Correggio.

"Was not that," he asked, "the very face of Saint Catherine? and so cheap!" he murmured in my ear. "*I* am doing it to learn, Signora; the others live by it. *I* can give it for half price. Four ducats — only four ducats!"

I assured him I had not the least wish to purchase his copies or any one else's; but he insisted, and whispered this last irresistible argument:

"Four ducats, and I will give you the cassetino to pack it up in!"

An English mercer once tried to delude me into buying half-a-dozen handkerchiefs with the same astute temptation — he would give me the box in which they were! — but the bait was not strong enough in either case. I declined the cassetino, and went to look at another gem, the Madonna del Corriglio. Another copyist — but, alas! a very shabby old man this time — insisted on making me buy *his* copy; and wherever we went to look at the small popular pictures, we met the same inexorable persecution — we were not to look, but to buy. Poor fellows! they all wanted to work, to sell, and to live.

END OF VOL. I.

PRINTED BY BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.
VOL. CCCCLX.

THE TWO SICILIES BY JULIA KAVANAGH.
IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

1213

A SUMMER AND WINTER
IN
THE TWO SICILIES.

BY
JULIA KAVANAGH,
AUTHOR OF "ADÈLE," "NATHALIE," &c.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
1858.

The Right of Translation is reserved.

I, 627⁽²⁾

1408925